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General Assembly

Sixty-second session

Official Records

13th plenary meeting
Monday, 1 October 2007, 3 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. Kerim ..... (The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia)

The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

Agenda item 8 (*continued*)

General debate

The President: I now call on His Excellency The Honourable George Andre Wells, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Vanuatu.

Mr. Wells (Vanuatu): I bring to this Assembly warm greetings from the people of Vanuatu.

Today is an important day in the histories of four of our Members of the United Nations family, and my Government and the people of Vanuatu congratulate the people of Tuvalu, Nigeria and Cyprus on their independence anniversaries, and the people of the People's Republic of China on the anniversary of the founding of that great nation.

Let me also join others in extending our felicitations to you, Sir. You take up your high position at a time when the United Nations is confronted by some enormous challenges. The uncertainty shrouding the horizon will severely test our common resolve to address global problems.

Mr. Mavroyiannis (Cyprus), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The escalating tension and animosity in the world today are an affront to the principles and values of the Organization and ultimately challenge international order. What the world needs right now is a hand of friendship to rebuild trust and faith among and between Members. The resounding war of words must not be accepted with complacency.

As one of the smallest members of the United Nations family of nations, Vanuatu would like to reaffirm its commitment to building global peace and security. We will also continue to participate in United Nations peacekeeping missions.

May I also take this opportunity to acknowledge the anniversary of the abolition of the slave trade some 200 years ago. My country also suffered tremendously from those horrendous acts executed by the great champions of deception and iniquity, who were responsible for enslaving thousands of men, women and children and shipping them to foreign shores under inhumane conditions using malicious torture. The days of blackbirding are long gone, but the bitter memories and injurious social consequences are entrenched in the history of my country and people. I honour all the descendants of slaves for their courage and their determination to live on. They deserve a special place in the countries in which their forefathers were forced to live. There also remains a huge debt owed to the countries that suffered large human losses from those heinous crimes against humanity. We cannot exonerate the past, but we can all hope for a just and better future. All countries must work together to prevent other insidious contemporary forms of slavery that have established themselves in our societies.

I welcome and support the decision to make climate change the theme of this session of the General Assembly. In the same vein, my Government highly

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commends the Secretary-General for convening last week's high-level meeting, which should provide an important catalyst for the conference to be held later this year in Bali.

I should now like to take this opportunity to recognize and commend the work done under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change to address the effects of climate change and to promote mitigation and adaptation strategies. But the point must be made that rapidly reducing the emission of greenhouse gases by all major emitters must be ensured within the next 10 to 15 years.

We followed with great interest the recent debate about the criteria and rules that the United Nations uses to decide whether a country should or should not be removed from its list of least developed countries. Graduation is desirable and fair if, and only if, it is the culmination of a process of structural progress over time — that is to say, progress based on irreversible improvements in the structure of the economy or in the basic indicators of development. It is only fair and logical, therefore, that the criteria used as a basis for identifying a country for graduation should be structural criteria.

The United Nations currently uses three criteria to identify cases for graduation. Admittedly, only two of the three are structural in nature. One relates to human capital — essentially as regards health and education — and the other to economic vulnerability. The proponents of reform of the graduation rule rightly postulate that those two criteria together should form the basis for identifying a country for graduation. The current graduation rule allows the United Nations to declare a country ready for graduation even if only one of those two paramount thresholds has been met. We consider the current practice to be conceptually flawed and fraught with serious implications. We believe this anomaly can easily be remedied.

My Government is of the view that the General Assembly should invite the Economic and Social Council to revisit the graduation rule in the light of the ongoing debate, and that the experts who advise the Council should be mandated to explore reform of the rule with a view to making human assets and economic vulnerability paramount. Such a reform would do justice to countries that have not achieved the implied structural progress. The Government of Vanuatu will do its utmost to cooperate with the relevant United Nations bodies and other like-minded nations and friends in forging consensus on this matter. I am convinced that such consensus implicitly exists, and needs only to be formalized.

Experts and members of the Committee for Development Policy should also be encouraged to undertake in-country consultations and to experience first-hand the development conditions of countries that are on the verge of graduation. We are talking about the livelihoods of peoples who may be seriously affected by decisions that are made at the United Nations.

We must continue to work together in shaping the architecture of the United Nations so that it is more resourceful and relevant to our times and to the peoples whom we represent.

I would like to commend the United Nations for increasing its presence in the Pacific region though its country-based offices. We will encourage more decentralization of functions to regional offices, which are better suited to responding to the needs of Members.

The situation in the Middle East is of grave concern to all peace-loving Members of the United Nations. We earnestly pray and hope for an early end to the conflict and to the suffering of all innocent children, women and men. Both Israel and Palestine have the right to live in peaceful coexistence as independent and sovereign States. The international community must be realistic about the future. Let us allow justice, security and long-lasting peace to prevail for both the Israeli and Palestinian peoples.

My Government very much welcomes the adoption of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. It is our hope that the Declaration will provide a framework for addressing the grievances of indigenous peoples, who remain suppressed, alienated and disadvantaged in the land of their forefathers. We can only hope that this instrument will provide an enabling mechanism to allow indigenous peoples the freedom to fully participate, without fear of reprisals, in the affairs and development of their countries. The Declaration should also serve to restore dignity to those who have remained second-class citizens in the land of their fathers. We cannot turn back the clock, but we can create a better future for them.

The Charter of the United Nations espouses the principles that continue to guide the Organization's efforts in the process of self-determination. The Charter calls for recognition of, and respect for, the fundamental and inalienable rights of people and territories still under colonial rule to determine their own future. We cannot champion democracy while turning a blind eye to those who have cried out for peace and freedom for many years, as have our brothers in West Papua. It is the moral responsibility of the Organization to act with diligence and to work towards promoting better conditions in larger freedom.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge the support of Vanuatu's major development partners — in particular Australia, New Zealand, France, Japan, the People's Republic of China, the United States of America and the European Union. I would also like to express my Government's gratitude to India, Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia, Turkey and various United Nations agencies for their ongoing contributions to the development of Vanuatu.

In conclusion, the world we live in today can only become a better place if all countries — big and small, powerful and weak — recognize, understand, value and respect each other as equals. The pride of the human person is the essence of building equality between all persons. Respect also means accepting the national sovereignty of each individual country and refraining from interfering in the internal affairs of any State. If we are to work towards building a future that will provide security, peace, hope and prosperity for all future generations, those important values must be upheld at all times.

May I remind the Assembly that our personal aims should not be paramount. We must work with all the diligence and wisdom that God the Almighty has given us to serve His people.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency The Honourable Archibald Lesao Lehohla, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Home Affairs and Public Safety of Lesotho.

Mr. Lehohla (Lesotho): My delegation associates itself with the compliments extended to Mr. Srgjan Kerim on his election to preside over the General Assembly at this session and to his predecessor, Sheikha Haya Rashed Al-Khalifa of Bahrain. I also wish to take this opportunity to welcome His Excellency Mr. Ban Ki-moon and to assure him of my country's unconditional support during his tenure as Secretary-General of the United Nations.

Lesotho congratulates the presidency on having invited Member States to comment on the theme "Responding to Climate Change" during this session. In 1992, the first Earth Summit, the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, was held in Rio de Janeiro. It was at that conference that we committed ourselves to achieving sustainable development in the twenty-first century. We reaffirmed our commitments in Johannesburg at the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development. It would seem that, for far too long thereafter, we agreed to disagree until we were confronted by the glaring and compelling scientific evidence that the link between global warming and human activities was unequivocal. We waited for the adverse effects of climate change to begin to be felt all over the globe before we could acknowledge that consensus was essential for concerted action on climate change.

Sadly, natural disasters have begun to strike. As is usually the case, it is the poorest nations and the most vulnerable countries that are being worst affected. My country is one of these. Unfavourable climatic conditions that are attributable to climate change have led to severe drought, which has resulted in acute food shortages. In order to address that crisis, my Government has declared a state of emergency on food security.

As the world prepares for the United Nations climate change conference, which will take place in Bali, Indonesia, in December 2007, we need to be reminded of the urgent need to build a solid and sustainable consensus on a global response to climate change for the period following the expiry of the 1997 Kyoto Protocol in the year 2012. My delegation calls upon the international community to endeavour to reach consensus on, among other things, steps that must be taken to reach the 60 to 80 per cent emission cuts that are required to stabilize the atmosphere. In that regard, the industrialized countries must assume the major responsibility, because scientific evidence has confirmed that it is the greenhouse gas emissions from those countries that are making natural disasters worse. The international community must also reaffirm its commitment to assisting the regions, such as Africa, that are the most vulnerable to climate change. In addition, my delegation calls upon developed countries

to assist developing countries in strengthening their capacity to adapt to climate change.

Allow us further to share our thoughts on what we consider to be the role of the United Nations in the twenty-first century. Our thoughts cover three areas: democracy, conflicts and development.

The United Nations was formed against the backdrop of colonialism, particularly on the African continent. As colonial rule slowly but surely ended, it left behind a legacy of undemocratic Governments. African countries were characterized by coups d'état day in, day out. Very few African countries have not had the "pleasure" of military rule.

Faced with that disturbing reality, some regional organizations adopted instruments to deal with unconstitutional changes of Government by carrying out sanctions. Here, mention should be made of the Organization of African Unity; its successor, the African Union; and the Commonwealth group of nations. Significantly, however, our Organization, the United Nations, has not adopted any instrument to carry out sanctions against defaulting Member States. That is what the United Nations must now do.

Today, the overwhelming majority of the world's countries adhere to the principles of democracy. Those countries hold periodic elections. However, the broadest common denominator of developing countries is the non-acceptance of election results; it has become a tradition for losing political parties to dispute them. Regrettably, that is done through unlawful means more often than not, despite the fact that there are always lawful mechanisms for challenging election results. This is one area in which we see a role for the United Nations, as the universal institution with the capacity necessary to assist requesting Member States in reversing these trends.

Just as the United Nations plays a critical role in world economic development, it should see as part of its role aggressively inculcating the culture of democracy in all nations. In particular, the Organization must help developing countries fight the culture of impunity. The common understanding must be a simple one: "When the people have spoken, respect their voice". Victors must learn to accept victory with humility and magnanimity, and losers to accept defeat with grace. In that way, the post-election period can be devoted to development, with all sides joining hands in a collective national effort. We must hasten to acknowledge the role that the United Nations is now playing in democratization processes, but we feel that it can do more.

That brings us to the second area: conflicts. Conflicts always feature prominently in our addresses before the Assembly. We must acknowledge that inter-State conflicts are on the decline across the globe. The same, however, cannot be said about internal conflicts. It cannot be denied that intra-State conflicts occur where there is little or no regard for democratic governance. If a country is not accustomed to holding elections or to accepting election results, conflicts arise. Other causes, which are also attributable to lack of democratic governance, include a lack of judicious sharing of a country's wealth, rampant poverty and ethnic strife.

In all such conflicts, small arms and light weapons have become weapons of choice. We therefore still consider it regrettable that in the year 2005, Member States were not able to adopt a legally binding international instrument on the marking and tracing of small arms and light weapons. We share the view that such an instrument could curtail the production, transfer and civilian possession of illicit small arms and light weapons. It is the urgent responsibility of the United Nations to facilitate the adoption of an effective international instrument for curbing the illicit trade in conventional weapons, which would make it harder for such weapons to end up in the hands of criminals. We hope that the arms trade treaty that is being proposed can be concluded expeditiously.

We must recall that in the year 2005, the Assembly solemnly proclaimed that the role of the entire international community, acting through the United Nations, was to protect populations from genocide, war crimes and other crimes against humanity. Unfortunately, that is not what is happening on the ground. We still notice inaction on the part of the Security Council, or its reaction coming too late. The harrowing experiences of Rwanda and now Darfur are living testimony to that. We attribute such inaction to the skewed composition and powers of the Council, especially the right of veto, which we are now convinced, more than ever before, is extremely subjective and exercised according to the interests of the concerned permanent member. That has, in some instances, caused a breaking of the ranks among the big five.

We continue to witness unilateral economic and financial blockades being imposed against other countries, and the denial to peoples of their right to self-determination, while others are still subject to occupation. Cuba, Palestine and the Western Sahara are here cases in point. We submit that it must remain the role of the United Nations in the twenty-first century to proactively preserve international peace and security. Our call is therefore that, where peace and security are threatened, the United Nations, through the Security Council, must act swiftly and decisively at all times.

But the United Nations can do so only if its structures are reformed to make them democratic and representative. Our basic premise would continue to be that the United Nations in the twenty-first century should inculcate democracy not only in Member countries, but also within itself.

It is a hard fact that the reform of the United Nations will not be complete without the reform of the Security Council. Members of this body have on several occasions reiterated the fact that the Security Council in its current form does not reflect the realities of today's world, and yet, for more than a decade now, the Assembly has remained stagnant on that issue. The presentation per se of various positions by major stakeholders, as well as various attempts to bridge major differences in those positions, have thus far failed to produce tangible results. Hence, my delegation shares the view that it is now time to move forward and begin intergovernmental negotiations. However, we wish to underline that, while the reform of the Security Council is possible, all Member States need to garner the necessary political will to attain that goal. The credibility of the Council is at stake.

Sustainable world peace and stability create the necessary space to deal with the development challenges of our countries and peoples. The world has acknowledged that the HIV and AIDS pandemic represents the top most challenge. The untold miseries brought about by that scourge are common cause. To the extent that no cure is available, HIV/AIDS will continue to be a threat to human existence. That threat, particularly in Africa, is compounded by worsening poverty and famine levels brought about, in most cases, by unfavourable weather conditions, compliments — in large measure, of climate change.

It is our view that, in a country enjoying political stability, the potential for all sectors of that nation to address those challenges is greatly enhanced. Moreover, no economic development can take place without democracy, peace and stability. Of course, the support of the developed countries will always be called for; hence, the need for them to fulfil their promise on official development assistance, which plays such a critical role in the economic development of the developing countries.

My delegation congratulates the Secretary-General, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, on his commitment to the strengthening of the Organization. For this Organization to acquit itself successfully in the twenty-first century, the role of its Secretary-General must remain sacrosanct. He must remain immune to influence by the interests of any groups or Powers. He must be faithful to the interests of all in the service of our family of nations. Above all, he must help, through the United Nations, to create a world at peace with itself.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Come Zoumara, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and la Francophonie of the Central African Republic.

Mr. Zoumara (Central African Republic) (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the delegation of the Central African Republic, and in the name of our Head of State, President of the Republic François Bozizé, I extend warm and heartfelt congratulations to Mr. Kerim on his election to preside over the General Assembly at its sixty-second session. We are also gratified to assert that his distinctive skills will guarantee the success of our work.

I also wish to pay a warm tribute to his predecessor, Sheikha Haya Rashed Al-Khalifa of the Kingdom of Bahrain. Five decades after the presidency of Mrs. Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit of India, she wisely led the work of the sixty-first session of the General Assembly, to the great satisfaction of all.

Finally, on behalf of President of the Republic and Head of State François Bozizé, allow me to address our sincere congratulations to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon on his dynamism and the efficiency with which he has undertaken his work in the context of current important international issues, including the maintenance of international peace and security, climate change, human rights, and combating drugs and terrorism in all its forms, which remain

pressing issues that no country in the world can address in isolation.

The conflicts afflicting the innocent civilian populations in the Middle East, the Great Lakes region and the Sudan, a neighbour of the Central African Republic, with their hosts of refugees and displaced persons, are causes of grave concern. The conflict in Darfur and the presence of rebels, armed groups and road-blockers cause the proliferation and unlawful circulation of small arms in that subregion, thus provoking widespread and continuous insecurity.

The consequences for the Central African Republic often take the shape of recurrent crises that chronically undermine the economic fabric and aggravate the poverty of our people by creating hazardous and precarious living conditions. All of this leads to the breakdown of the social fabric, the loss of civic spirit and, ultimately, the failure of confidence in their institutions and, especially, in justice.

We applaud the adoption of Security Council resolution 1778 (2007) on the deployment of the hybrid multidimensional force to the borders of the Central African Republic, Chad and the Sudan. We should like to see it accompanied, however, by genuine support for the reinforcement of institutional capacities in the Central African Republic. In that regard, we thank and praise France for its courageous decision and effective participation in that peacekeeping force.

During the fifteenth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development, held in New York from 30 April to 11 May 2007, whose chosen theme was turning commitments into action and working together in partnership, participants highlighted the correlation and interdependence among the four areas of the thematic cluster: energy for sustainable development, industrial development, air pollution and climate change. The Commission's fifteenth session also demonstrated that much significant progress remains to be achieved: advances in those sectors are minimal and still far from the objectives the international community set for itself in Rio in 1992 and in Johannesburg in 2002.

In order to meet these challenges of the environment in particular and sustainable development in general, a partnership endeavour, supported by sufficient resources, is absolutely essential in order to allow developing countries, in particular in Africa, the Caribbean and the South Pacific, to implement these commitments, especially since those regions, and particularly Africa, while bearing but little responsibility for the advent of this phenomenon, are more vulnerable to the risks associated with climate change.

By choosing climate change as a central topic of this General Assembly session and organizing the high-level dialogue "The future in our hands: Addressing the leadership challenge of climate change", the Assembly President has pinpointed the growing concern associated with global warming for a country such as ours, the Central African Republic. Indeed, the problems associated with climate change now lie at the core of international debates. The moment has thus arrived to transform good intentions into concrete actions.

For its part, the Central African Republic hopes that during the Bali Climate Change Conference this December the wealthy countries will at last honour their commitments in the area of technology transfer and will provide assistance to strengthening the national and regional structures required for effective action to combat climate change. I would like to pay a warm tribute to the Secretary-General for the interest he has shown in these problems and for his initiative of appointing three special envoys in the area of climate change.

Allow me to present the specific case of my country, the Central African Republic, which spans three climatic zones, with great diversity in its ecosystem, from dense humid forest in the south, to the pre-Sahelian area in the north.

This central position at the crossroads of different African ecosystems — from the Sudan-Sahelian areas in the north to the dense humid forest in the south — gives it great ecological potential. It has many assets: rich and fertile soil, mineral and forest wealth, diversified fauna and varied agriculture, with the latter being the country's economic base.

The Central African Republic understands the wealth of its natural resources, but also the threats involved. That is why we have built environmental concerns into the constitution of our country, notably in its preamble and its article 9 where the collective consciousness is called upon to respect the principle of good environmental governance.

Despite these resources, the economic reality of the country shows that the Central African Republic is among the least developed countries, where the population lives on less than a dollar a day. In recent years, the rate of economic growth has fallen below the average predictions. Structurally, the country comes up against many obstacles in its development efforts. For instance, its domestic market is tiny, and it is isolated domestically and externally because of its distance from maritime ports. The economic situation may be summed up as follows: lack of individual income, limited State resources, inequality between men and women and the rate of illiteracy.

Our economy is largely dependent on environmental resources. Aware of the difficulties it faces, the Government has opted for regional and international cooperation by participating in many initiatives concerning the environment and sustainable forestry management, such as the Central African Forest Commission, the Network of Protected Areas of Central Africa, the Sangha Tri-National Landscape and the Congo Basin Forest Partnership.

Generally speaking, the implementation of most of these initiatives has not met expectations: the initiatives were ambitious, but the capacities for implementation and the financial resources were inadequate. The enterprises exploiting these resources impose binding environmental rules on us while the population does not reap any benefit.

We need to halt and eliminate poverty with the participation of all. Poverty creates injustice. Here I wish to cite President Sarkozy, the printed text of whose recent statement observed that justice meant the same chances for success for each poor child in the world as for each rich one. In this very Hall, President Sarkozy said:

> "Justice means that a developing country on which we wish to impose environmental rules, even though its inhabitants have barely enough to eat, can be helped to put such rules in place. Justice means that we cannot tap a country's resources without paying a fair price for them.
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> "...
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> "I solemnly appeal to the United Nations to concern itself with the issue of fairer distribution of wealth and of the income derived from commodities and technology" (*A/62/PV.4*).

The Central African Republic is ready to open its borders to developed nations and to public and private investors in order to increase its resources. The Central African Republic applauds the great nations — France, the United States, China, Japan, Germany, Britain and Russia and certain emerging countries of the South — for their willingness to cooperate in order to slow the deterioration of the environment.

We thank the European Union and the African Development Bank for their assistance and, in particular, the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank for having allowed the Central African Republic to reach the decision point under the enhanced Highly Indebted Poor Countries Initiative. We praise the actions of those international financial institutions, and we ask them to open a new chapter on the environment and the economies of poor countries.

We call on all for a continuing effort to reduce inequality between men and women, because in Africa, women are very often heads of families in the most remote regions. They play a very important role. In that way, the support of the international community in eliminating inequality will provide a solution in terms of sustainable development.

We cannot achieve a healthy environment without wiping out illiteracy. We hope that the developed countries of the South and the North will help poor countries to create the right conditions in terms of informing and training their populations in order to show them that they have an interest in preserving the environment.

Our country is rich. It wishes to exploit the wealth of its subsoil in order to protect its environment. With assistance, we can hope to bring ourselves closer to the Millennium Development Goals by 2015.

In his opening statement, the President stated, "Keep your mind level. If the mind is level, the whole world will be level" (*A/62/PV.4*).

The President of the Central African Republic, Mr. François Bozizé, often teaches us about the mind — the spirit:

> "Infinite spirit is all. All is one. All is all. And all is the Universe. The Universe is calm. If we have understood this, let the world follow the example of the wise by avoiding the errors of the

semi-wise who perish because of their foolishness".

I would like to hope that this message will be favourably received by our partners, both bilateral and multilateral.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Sam Kutesa, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Uganda.

Mr. Kutesa (Uganda): Allow me at the outset to extend our congratulations to Mr. Kerim on his election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its sixty-second session. I wish to thank most sincerely his predecessor, Her Excellency Sheikha Haya Rashed Khalifa of Bahrain, for the able manner in which she handled the vital business of the sixty-first session. I also wish to express my gratitude to the Secretary-General, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, for his leadership of our Organization, and most especially for his untiring efforts in favour of conflict resolution and peace on the African continent and elsewhere.

Sixty-two years ago, the founding fathers of the United Nations came together, determined, in the words of the Charter, "to employ international machinery for the promotion of the economic and social advancement of all peoples". The Organization they created was to be a centre for harmonizing the actions of nations in the attainment of these common goals. Today humankind is faced with a common threat in the form of climate change. The General Assembly's choice of responding to climate change as the theme for this session is timely. It will help draw attention to the global challenge for which no single country has a solution. It is only through concerted and sustained international cooperation that action to combat the effects and further escalation of climate change can be taken.

There is no doubt that climate change is the biggest danger facing humankind, especially the poor. The threat of extreme conditions, including floods and drought, is a major concern. It has many implications for development, particularly for agrarian communities with fewer resources to cope with additional stresses and shocks brought about by this phenomenon. The increasing frequency and severity of prolonged drought threaten water supplies to millions of people in poor countries, as well as agriculture which is overwhelmingly subsistence and rain-fed and, therefore, vulnerable to climate variability and change.

The vulnerability of the health sector has also been evident as frequent floods result in outbreaks of waterborne diseases, such as cholera, typhoid, dysentery and the increased incidence of malaria.

Indeed, climate change today constitutes a danger to human security, considering the effects of climate change on the very existence of some small island States and coastal cities, as well as the devastation by hurricanes and typhoons.

Several years ago, the world was alerted to the danger of climate change. Under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, a number of actions were agreed upon. We all agreed to undertake a three-pronged approach, including development, access to appropriate technology, mitigation and adaptation. It is unfortunate that, so far, no meaningful actions have been undertaken to implement these agreed interventions.

My delegation believes that the time is now to implement these high-priority activities. We should, however, recognize that responding to climate change will require political leadership at all levels, starting from the centre and extending to the grassroots. Increasing collaborative action on adaptation is urgently needed, so that vulnerable countries and communities can cope with the unavoidable impact of climate change. Reforestation efforts and control of greenhouse gas emissions are urgent actions that we can undertake together. However, reforestation on its own will not produce the desired results without adequate investment in renewable energy sources as a measure against the massive depletion of forests for fuel. Developed countries should encourage companies to invest in hydro-electric power generation and other clean energy sources in developing countries. For such projects to be undertaken, measures such as a successful fifteenth International Development Association replenishment is critical. We all must learn to safeguard and use available resources sparingly for the sake of future generations.

Uganda considers the United Nations Climate Change Conference, to be held in Bali, Indonesia, this December, to be critical in the development of a long-term response to climate change. It is an opportunity to begin concrete negotiations on a global strategy that is acceptable to all and implementable. Prior to Bali, however, this Assembly should agree on guiding principles that can help bring together all relevant

aspects of the problem. The industrialized countries should take the lead in cutting emissions, while developing countries will have to pursue low-emission development strategies and benefit from incentives for assistance for adaptation and for limiting emissions. We must commit ourselves to an approach that balances adaptation and mitigation, underpinned by adequate financing arrangements and investments in new and innovative technologies.

As Members of the United Nations, our countries share a vision of a better standard of life, in larger freedom, as enshrined in our Charter. We are, however challenged by a persistence of poverty in many of our countries. Recent statistics indicate that, worldwide, 1.2 billion people live on one dollar a day, while 2.8 billion survive on less than two dollars. The gap between the rich and the poor continues to widen, both within States and among States.

The World Bank reported in 2003 that average income in the wealthiest 20 countries is 37 times that of the poorest 20, which is twice the ratio of what it was in 1970. Many countries, especially those in sub-Saharan Africa, ended the last decade with lower per capita incomes than at its beginning. Poverty is one of the biggest threats to international peace, security and the environment.

At the Millennium Summit, world leaders expressed their determination to halve world poverty by the year 2015. The midpoint progress report on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) that was released in July this year indicates that countries in Africa and elsewhere are proving that large-scale progress in achieving the MDGs is possible under conditions of adequate financing, much of which should flow from a strengthened global partnership for development. It is critical that the Monterrey targets be met.

As we respond to climate change, the fight against poverty remains an integral part of the effort. Unless we address poverty in developing countries, the poor will continue to destroy the environment by cutting trees for firewood and employing poor agricultural practices.

There are time-tested ways to bring people out of poverty. Trade liberalization and export-led growth have the potential to lift millions out of poverty. However, to benefit from trade, developing countries must add value to their raw materials and sell them as finished products, taking advantage of appropriate value chains. That will not only increase earnings but create jobs, thus ending the mass migrations to the developed countries. They should develop their human resources through education and better health services. Education is a critical factor in transforming society. An educated middle class with adequate income to spend is critical for industrialization and the transition of societies. That has happened in some countries of South-East Asia; it can happen elsewhere in the developing world. As a priority, agriculture needs to be commercialized. Related to that is the urgent need for regional integration so as to enlarge markets.

Under heavy pressure, many developing countries have removed trade barriers, while the developed countries have not reciprocated in such key areas as agriculture and textiles, where the former have a comparative advantage. Is it not absurd that a cow in the European Union gets a daily subsidy of $2.2, while 40 per cent of the world's population lives on less than $2 a day? The World Bank estimates that protectionism by the developed world costs developing countries $100 billion annually. A fair system will require appropriate measures to deal with the unfair trade privileges of developed countries that hinder market access. It is vital that the stalled trade talks under the Doha Development Round be resumed and successfully concluded.

Peace and security are necessary conditions for sustainable development. The rise in inter- and intra-State conflict has been the hallmark of the post-cold-war era. Internal conflicts have spilled over borders to create regional instability. Internal displacement has taken place, and equally alarming has been the international refugee crisis that has resulted from such conflicts. In some countries, central authority has collapsed, creating havens for terrorists and drug traffickers, with the attendant threats to international peace and security. No meaningful actions against poverty and in favour of environmental protection can take place in that kind of atmosphere.

The President returned to the Chair.

Most of Africa is now peaceful, and democracy is being consolidated through regular elections, the observance of human rights and constitutionalism. However, there are some areas that require urgent international attention. There is a need to ensure peace and stability in Darfur in accordance with the

internationally agreed framework under Security Council resolution 1769 (2007). Further attention should be given to supporting the implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement between the Government of the Sudan and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement in the South.

In Somalia, the General Assembly should support an all-inclusive peace and reconciliation process and the Africa Union Military Observer Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) with the necessary resources to facilitate the peacekeeping. Uganda has honoured its pledge of troops for peacekeeping; we call on other countries that made similar pledges to fulfil them. The international effort in Somalia should focus on capacity-building to empower the Somali people to solve their own problems. We also call on the Secretary-General to finalize plans for possible deployment of a United Nations peacekeeping force to replace AMISOM, as called for in Security Council resolution 1772 (2007).

In the Great Lakes region, various efforts are under way to improve peace and security and to create an atmosphere conducive to development. Through the Tripartite Plus One Commission, bringing together the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda, Burundi and Uganda, we have agreed on a framework and actions to deal with negative forces that pose a threat to peace and security in the region. In that regard, we refer to Chapter VII of the United Nations Charter and to provisions of Security Council resolution 1756 (2007). The Security Council should reinforce the mandate and the means of the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo to enable it effectively to work with Congolese armed forces to totally eradicate the threat of negative forces operating in the territory of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

In northern Uganda, we are holding peace talks with the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA). Of the five agenda items, two agreements have been concluded and signed. Those are the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement and an agreement on comprehensive solutions. However, the LRA has not met any of the terms of the very first Agreement on Cessation of Hostilities. For example, it is stipulated that LRA forces assemble at Ri-Kwangba in southern Sudan; they have, however, not done so to date. They are still camped in Garamba National park in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. We urge the international community to bring adequate pressure to bear on the LRA to assemble at Ri-Kwangba and to set a time frame for the talks. Talks cannot go on forever. As we inch towards a comprehensive peace agreement, international support and understanding are required to balance the need for durable peace and stability on the one hand, and the imperative for justice on the other.

I wish to assure the General Assembly that Uganda is fully aware of its obligations under the Rome Statute and cannot undermine it. We cannot condone impunity. To that end, we are working closely with the International Criminal Court to ensure accountability under the complementarity stipulations. Uganda will be convening a Consultative Group meeting later this year to mobilize resources and coordinate actions for the post-conflict reconciliation programme in northern Uganda. The international community is invited to support that programme.

When you chose "Responding to climate change" as the theme for this session, Sir, I believe you intended to have this session consider and recommend ways of addressing that common threat. You believed, as indeed we do, that a world that pays no attention to that problem is fatally damaging the interests of future generations. Addressing climate change will involve fighting poverty, ensuring peace and security, and investing in clean energy, especially in developing countries. This session should be the turning point at which we all come together and agree on ways to save our planet.

The President: I now give the floor to Her Excellency Mrs. Kinga Göncz, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Hungary.

Mrs. Göncz (Hungary): Allow me first of all to warmly congratulate you, Sir, on your election as President of the General Assembly at its sixty-second session. I am pleased to see you, a high-ranking official from the rather underrepresented Eastern European Group, assuming that prestigious post of the United Nations. In fulfilling your challenging tasks during this session, you may be assured of the support and cooperation of the delegation of Hungary. I would also like to pay tribute to your predecessor, Sheikha Haya Rashed Al-Khalifa.

During the sixty-first session, Member States worked hard to come to agreement on the proposals made at the 2005 Summit meeting, but we still need to do more to ensure that the United Nations system is managed coherently and effectively. I believe that the

world needs, more than ever before, effective multilateralism, which is still a key word for the future. We should make progress on management reform, mandate review and disarmament, and define further concrete steps towards a renewed Security Council.

Hungary would have preferred for the issue of Security Council reform to have seen more progress during the sixty-first session of the General Assembly. The impasse was certainly not due to the lack of effort on the part of the President of the General Assembly or to a shortage of creative ideas. We believe that the best solution would still be a balanced increase of seats to better reflect the political realities of today. The enlargement process should be combined with tangible improvement of the Council's working methods.

We welcome the adoption of the new resolution on the revitalization of the General Assembly. It is up to each Member State to make the work of the Assembly meaningful and to ensure that the Assembly takes up issues of genuine concern and takes decisions that have a real impact on the political process.

Let me now turn to Geneva, where important reforms have taken place as well. The Human Rights Council has finally started its work, in an atmosphere of high expectations. The consensus over the universal periodic review mechanism sends a clear message that all countries will have their human rights records examined at regular intervals. Thus, no country will be immune from international scrutiny. However, in order to make it truly meaningful, we have to build a credible and robust mechanism. Special procedures and contributions to the review from treaty bodies and non-governmental organizations will prove to be essential in that regard.

In order to better protect human rights and fundamental freedoms, the system of special procedures — a unique web of protection — has continued to provide effective action for the benefit of victims of human rights abuses. Special rapporteurs and independent experts have continued their work, giving a voice to the voiceless, even at times when the Council was focusing mainly on the task of institution-building.

We are thoroughly convinced that both thematic and country-specific mandates remain valid, given the numerous human rights violations still occurring on a daily basis. In that regard, we concur with the Secretary-General, who has emphasized the need to consider all situations of possible human rights violations on an equal footing. Not having a special rapporteur assigned to a particular country does not absolve that country from its obligations under the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other human rights instruments.

I should now like to share some thoughts about an issue dear to my country. We welcomed with great satisfaction the recent decision of the Human Rights Council to establish a forum on minority issues. I am confident that the forum will provide a useful platform for dialogue and exchange of views between minorities, Governments and other stakeholders on issues related to national or ethnic, linguistic and religious minorities.

Allow me to place special emphasis on the empowerment of women. We firmly believe in the need for the effective involvement of women in the decision-making processes at both the national and the international levels. In that regard, Hungary supports the ongoing debate on the future of the strengthened gender equality architecture. We welcome the steps taken towards achieving effective gender mainstreaming throughout the entire United Nations system.

On 30 March, we witnessed the signing ceremony of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. That new international instrument will improve the living conditions of almost 650 million persons with disabilities all over the world, ensuring equal opportunities for them in all aspects of life. As the second State party to ratify the Convention and its Optional Protocol, we hope that they will enter into force soon.

Seven years ago, our Governments made a remarkable promise to the world in adopting the Millennium Declaration (resolution 55/2). Although there has certainly been some progress in achieving its objectives, there will be regions of the world where the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) will not have been met by 2015 if we do not intensify our efforts. In the meantime, we must also emphasize the central role of national policies and development strategies in achieving the Goals. The sustainability of development depends heavily on national ownership and leadership. At the global level, the United Nations has a comparative advantage in providing technical assistance in the preparation and implementation of

national development plans. We fully support the recommendations of the High-level Panel on United Nations System-wide Coherence to improve the operational effectiveness, inter-agency cooperation, predictability and accountability of the United Nations system.

The Millennium Development Goals represent the global commitment to fundamental rights, which must be guaranteed if we genuinely seek to strengthen our democracies. Democracy should also mean creating the conditions for sustainable economic development that provides people with access — through decent jobs — to opportunities to achieve full personal development.

We are particularly pleased that Hungary can share its transitional experiences, both as a member of the Advisory Board of the United Nations Democracy Fund and through the International Centre for Democratic Transition, which is based in Budapest and which has a partnership agreement with the Democracy Fund. The United Nations has a special responsibility to address challenges related to institution-building and to promote democracy. As Amartya Sen, the Nobel Prize winning economist has said, countries need not be fit for democracy; they need to become fit through democracy.

Hungary, as an emerging donor, is determined to meet the obligations set out in the Millennium Declaration and the Millennium Development Goals. We are ready to increase our official development assistance and to carry out our efforts in line with the European Consensus on development and the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness. However, we are convinced that scaling up the volume of aid in itself will not necessarily lead to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. It is also important to emphasize the need for better complementarity, coordination and coherence in development cooperation.

Having been fully integrated into the European Union (EU) and NATO structures, we are committed to carrying out qualitative change in the outreach of Hungarian foreign policy. We want to make our policy and our presence more visible in all parts of the world: an active development cooperation and assistance policy coupled with an increased presence in United Nations bodies. We are resolved to attach special attention to creating more balance in the geographical scope of our cooperation policy in order to include African, Asian and Latin American countries. Stepping up our outreach efforts and developing not only assistance activities but also economic ties with Africa will mark the beginning of a new era in our relationship with that continent.

We are also ready to assume more responsibilities in various international forums. Our ambitions are best embodied in our application for a non-permanent seat on the Security Council for the period 2012-2013. We view our potential membership as an opportunity to engage in constructive cooperation with all our partners in order to achieve our common objectives on the basis of shared interests and values.

Let me now focus on some of the most urgent foreign policy issues of our day.

Peace and stability in the Balkan region is of paramount importance to my country, and to Europe as a whole. While the question of the future status of Kosovo has drawn international attention, we are aware that the issue of Kosovo is a challenge that needs to be primarily tackled by Europe. Nevertheless, the United Nations has played a pivotal role in the process to date. Our hope is that that will continue to be the case until a proper solution is found.

There is no doubt that there is a significant role to be played by the EU in facilitating a satisfactory solution for Kosovo. One thing is certain among all the uncertainties: the status quo is not a solution. More than ever, the region needs stability, economic development and inter-ethnic reconciliation. The European Union has invested much in the region in terms of material, political and military assistance. It has also offered the countries of the region prospects for joining the European Union.

With regard to Serbia, we are convinced that reinforcing the prospects for future membership of the EU may facilitate finding a solution to the question of Kosovo. Hungary therefore looks forward to a successful outcome to the new round of negotiations facilitated by the EU-United States-Russia Troika, which the parties should approach in a constructive and frank manner. We hope that the encouraging signs of trust and a constructive approach will prevail in the course of the entire process, and that the parties will be able to come to an agreement endorsed by the Security Council.

We are following with great attention the work of the teams set up recently by Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert and Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas to negotiate core issues related to a permanent solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. We welcome the initiative of the President of the United States to convene an international conference in November.

Hungary is firmly committed to the reconstruction of Afghanistan. As a State member of the North Atlantic alliance, we have been involved in the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force since 2003. On 1 October 2006, we took over the leadership of the Provincial Reconstruction Team in Baghlan province. I am proud of the successful work done by Hungary's military contingent and by Hungarian teams of aid workers. Moreover, I can confirm our future commitment in Afghanistan, which enjoys broad political consensus among all the parties represented in the Hungarian parliament. Nevertheless, we must not forget that the primary responsibility for the stabilization and development of Afghanistan lies with the Afghan people themselves. We are concerned about the security situation and the attacks carried out by Taliban and anti-Government forces, and we firmly condemn all hostage-taking actions. Drug production and trafficking continue to be a major source of instability, and we note the increase in opium production with grave concern. We encourage the Afghan Government, working in close cooperation with the international community and in particular with its regional partners, to take effective measures to stabilize the whole region.

The stabilization of Iraq is one of the major challenges in the Middle East. We appreciate the results that have been achieved so far in the course of the country's democratic transformation. However, the Iraqi political class needs to overcome the present state of deep division and start to walk down the path of reconciliation and cooperation in order to bring peace and stability to the country. As a precondition for a long-lasting settlement of the conflict, the international community must enable Iraqi leaders to assume ownership and govern their country in an independent way.

Hungary is very concerned about the acts of violence perpetrated by the security forces of the Burma/Myanmar Government. We are committed to respecting human rights and democracy, and we therefore strongly condemn the brutal physical attacks against peaceful demonstrators. I reiterate our previous call on the Government of Burma/Myanmar to fully respect human rights and the norms of democracy, in particular the rights to peaceful assembly and to the free expression of opinions.

Due to one of the most worrisome conflicts on the African continent — the one raging in Darfur — the situation in the Sudan and nearby countries is still unpredictable and explosive. Hungary welcomes the renewed momentum in the efforts to resolve the Darfur conflict, in particular the agreement reached on the deployment of the African Union-United Nations hybrid force and the subsequent adoption of Security Council resolution 1769 (2007). We consider it essential that the Hybrid Operation be launched, and that troops be fully deployed in the full number authorized, as soon as possible. I would like to commend Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon on having made resolving the Darfur conflict a priority, as well as on his visit to the Sudan. It is in that context that I reaffirm our support for the peacebuilding and peacekeeping efforts of the United Nations.

Hungary welcomes the fact that the Peacebuilding Commission has started its work and has met in a country-specific format to consider the cases of Burundi and Sierra Leone. We look forward to the first report on its work. We consider the Commission to be an important instrument to enhance the capabilities of the United Nations to support countries emerging from conflict.

We are fully aware of the need to strengthen the capacity of the United Nations to mount and sustain complex and multidimensional peacekeeping operations. Hungary commends the efforts made by the Secretary-General to achieve that purpose and welcomes the General Assembly's decision to establish the Department of Field Support. My country's track record in the field of peacekeeping demonstrates that we are willing to actively support the Security Council's decisions. Hungarian military and police personnel are present in many of the peacekeeping missions of the United Nations, namely, in Cyprus, Georgia, Kosovo, Lebanon and Western Sahara.

My recent participation at the fifty-first General Conference of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and my talks with Director General Mohamed ElBaradei reaffirmed my conviction that questions

relating to nuclear safety and non-proliferation should remain high on our agenda.

Hungary shares the concerns of the international community over Iran's nuclear programme. We deplore Iran's failure to take the steps required by the IAEA Board of Governors and by Security Council resolutions, steps necessary to re-establish international confidence in the peaceful nature of its nuclear programme. We welcomed the adoption of Security Council resolutions 1737 (2006) and 1747 (2007), and we fully comply with the obligations set forth therein. We hope that Iran will soon realize that a diplomatic and negotiated solution is possible and that compliance has many benefits.

Hungary continues to support the process aimed at achieving the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula in a peaceful manner and welcomes the first promising results of the Six-Party Talks. Developments related to the North Korean nuclear issue have underscored the importance of the early entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty.

Hungary supports all multilateral, regional and bilateral efforts that contribute in an effective manner to our common goal of achieving disarmament and curbing the spread of weapons of mass destruction. Such efforts must also aim at upholding and strengthening key international treaties and export control regimes. In that context, one of the most important challenges is to ensure compliance with the Treaty on the Non-proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. Moreover, Hungary welcomes the entry into force of the International Convention for the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism, which we ratified in April.

An urgent issue in the field of counter-terrorism is the full and earliest possible implementation of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy. In that regard, the main responsibility lies with Member States, which should all also actively participate in the upcoming implementation review. The conclusion of a comprehensive convention on international terrorism remains another high priority for Hungary.

Fifteen years after the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, the Rio Summit, it is evident that, at the current pace, our efforts will not be sufficient to halt the emerging global threats, in particular that of climate change. The European Union has a clear position in that regard, and it has proposed to speed up the drafting of a new global compact. As a member of the EU, Hungary fully agrees with the urgency of the matter. We hope that the ongoing deliberations on the future of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and of the Kyoto Protocol will lead to concrete results within two years. I would like to take this opportunity to welcome the efforts made by Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon to raise awareness about climate change in the international community.

On behalf of my country, I would like to reiterate Hungary's commitment to upholding the rule of international law, to giving priority to effective multilateralism, to spreading the culture of cooperation and the peaceful settlement of international disputes, and to making every effort to preserve a sustainable environment for future generations.

In conclusion, Hungary is strongly committed to working with you, Mr. President, during the sixty-second session of the General Assembly to achieve the objectives set out in the 2005 World Summit Outcome.

The President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Mourad Medelci, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Algeria.

Mr. Medelci (Algeria) (*spoke in French*): I have the particular pleasure of conveying to you, Sir, my sincere congratulations on your election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its sixty-second session. This attests to the esteem and trust enjoyed by your country. Your unanimous election to your high office is also recognition of your ability and your wealth of experience as a talented academic and diplomat, which we believe will ensure success in the work of this session. I assure you of my delegation's support and its full readiness to assist you in carrying out your lofty mission.

I should also like to thank Her Excellency Sheikha Haya Rashed Al-Khalifa for her commendable efforts throughout the entirety of the previous session of the General Assembly. The measures she took are a further step towards modernizing the United Nations and improving its effectiveness.

I would also like to express our sincere gratitude to Mr. Ban Ki-moon and to tell him how pleased we are to see him participating in the work of the General Assembly as Secretary-General. By unanimously electing him to lead the Organization, we have demonstrated our confidence in his ability to continue

the work of reforming the United Nations begun by his predecessor with a view to making the Organization an effective tool in achieving the noble objectives of promoting peace and development throughout the world. We should continue to support him in realizing that enormous and ambitious undertaking.

Gathered here at the General Assembly two years ago for the World Summit, our heads of State or Government took historic decisions for the future of the United Nations. Although we are pleased with the progress made to date, there is still a long way to go in achieving all the goals set at the Summit. Efforts must still be made to find the most appropriate response to the serious threat posed by climate change, which was the subject of discussion last week; achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs); a comprehensive convention on international terrorism, which has still not been agreed; strengthening United Nations system-wide coherence; and reforming the Security Council, without which the overall reform process will remain incomplete. Algeria, which has always called for thorough and comprehensives reform of the Organization, continues to believe that decisive commitment and the widest possible endorsement by Member States are crucial to achieving the fruitful consensus to bring about a positive outcome of this ambitious reform effort.

The world today faces new types of destabilizing factors and numerous threats that jeopardize international peace and security. That is especially the case with regard to terrorism, which is by definition a threat to the basic right to life. It spares no region of the world and makes no distinction as to race, gender or religion. It therefore requires resolute international mobilization and a collective and decisive response based on solidarity from the international community. Only in that way can we ensure the effectiveness and sustainability of the effort.

My country has long suffered from heinous terrorism, which we have fought on our own and for which we paid a great price due to the indifference of the international community in the 1990s. We therefore appreciate the daily growing awareness of the dangers posed by that phenomenon and of the need to prevent and eradicate it. In that regard, Algeria supported the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, which was adopted by the General Assembly in September 2006 as resolution 60/288. We call for a commitment by Member States to implement it immediately. We would like to point out, however, that the fight against terrorism should not be waged solely through the use of force but should also entail addressing the underlying causes of the phenomenon, in particular by finding just and equitable solutions to conflicts, especially the conflict in the Middle East.

In addition to expeditious measures to thwart this devastating phenomenon, it is also urgent to conclude a comprehensive convention against international terrorism that includes a clear definition of the concept of terrorism. Such a convention should also clearly de-link terrorism from the legitimate struggle of peoples against occupation. It should also not equate terrorism with any religion, civilization or geographic region.

In a world torn by conflict and tormented by extremism and intolerance of all sorts, it is essential today that we work to calm hearts and minds in order to promote a productive dialogue among cultures and civilizations, so as to dispel misunderstanding, eliminate prejudices and stereotypes and strengthen mutual understanding. With patience, determination and solidarity, we should dispel all theories and associations that promote the dangerous discourse of a clash of civilizations.

We have great hopes for the General Assembly's forthcoming High-Level Dialogue on Interreligious and Intercultural Understanding and Cooperation for Peace. We hope that the dialogue will serve to bring rationality to debates surrounding this issue, in line with the ambitious efforts of the Alliance of Civilization. Algeria is pleased at the particular attention given to this issue, including the appointment of Mr. Jorge Sampaio as High Representative for the Alliance of Civilizations. We will spare no effort to promote this approach, which is more crucial than ever, to achieve a productive dialogue among civilizations that makes it possible for us to address such common challenges as underdevelopment, ignorance, poverty, racism and extremism.

Despite the Organization's laudable efforts, the task of decolonization remains unfinished. I would like to refer in particular to Western Sahara, which is the last case of decolonization in Africa. Its people are still deprived the right to self-determination enshrined in the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly and the Security Council. The international community had harboured genuine hope for a just and lasting

resolution of the conflict, especially in the wake of the Security Council's unanimous support for the peace plan proposed by Mr. James Baker, former Personal Envoy of the Secretary-General — a plan that resolution 1495 (2003) rightly referred to as an "optimum political solution" (*para. 1*).

We are resolutely committed to the search for a peaceful solution under international law. Algeria welcomed the adoption on 30 April 2007 of Security Council resolution 1754 (2007), which clearly emphasized the need to find a just and lasting political solution which will provide for the right of self-determination of the Saharawi people. We hope that the negotiations that began in June and resumed in August at New York will continue, in order to allow the two parties — Morocco and the Frente POLISARIO — to reach an agreement in line with international law that makes it possible for the people of Western Sahara to decide their own fate freely and without constraints in a referendum on self-determination.

Other tragedies are taking place in Africa: fratricidal wars, pandemics and natural disasters. This tragic situation only serves to push countries with limited resources into a precarious situation that diminishes the possibility of socio-economic development of any kind.

Although, from its inception in 2004 the Peace and Security Council of the African Union (AU) has been providing appropriate African solutions to conflicts on the continent, and as commendable as those have been, its efforts will not be effective without the firm commitment and considerable sustained assistance of the entire international community — such as the tremendous efforts made recently to resolve the crisis in Darfur. Effectively addressing the multidimensional problems involving peace, security and development faced by the continent today also requires that the international community support the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), which is a viable vehicle to address Africa's socio-economic concerns.

In the Middle East, which is another especially unstable part of the world, the situation is deteriorating. This is reflected in daily violence and recurring crises. If we are not vigilant, that situation threatens to undermine any hope of establishing lasting peace in the region. The international community must once again become more involved in order to establish a just and lasting peace in the Middle East that is based on the implementation of the Road Map and the Arab Peace Initiative. In that regard, Algeria welcomes the renewed attention being given to the Arab Peace Initiative, as reflected in President Bush's proposal to hold an international peace conference this fall. The international community should support that effort, which has rekindled hope for a comprehensive resolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict, in order to avert failure, which would have enormous consequences for international peace and security.

The situation in Iraq also continues to be of concern. That fraternal country is experiencing scenes of deadly violence on a daily basis. Sectarian and communal violence also prevails throughout the country, which undermine the values of citizenship and coexistence among the children of a single people. Those events appeal to our collective conscience and call on us to mobilize assistance to that country by making our contribution to finding a solution that preserves Iraq's national unity, sovereignty and territorial integrity.

I should also like to express my country's concern about the current impasse in the multilateral disarmament and non-proliferation process: the failure of the Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) held in May 2005 and the impasse at the 2005 World Summit on this issue. This is a matter that calls on us to act, for it is of crucial importance to the future of humankind. My country continues to believe that complying with the NPT entails the comprehensive and equitable implementation of all its provisions, ensuring a balance between the rights and obligations of States parties. The three fundamental pillars of the Treaty must be inseparable and complementary. Moreover, the goal of preventing nuclear proliferation should not be a pretext for preventing developing countries from having access to nuclear technology for peaceful purposes.

On the basis of that deeply held belief, on 9 January 2007 Algeria was host to the first African high-level regional conference on the theme of nuclear energy's contribution to peace and sustainable development. The goal was to translate into action the common African concern to ensure that nuclear energy serves to promote peace and sustainable development on the continent.

The issue of development has always been at the core of the international community's concerns. In that regard, it is extremely important that it continue to be a very high priority for the Organization. In the light of the September 2000 Millennium Summit and the follow-up meetings held both under the auspices of the United Nations and outside the system, it is clear that the issue of development has become one of the major challenges — such as peace, with which it is inextricably linked — that the international community must address. In that connection, African heads of State, who launched NEPAD, and the leaders of the Group of Eight (G8) met last June at Heiligendamm, Germany, and took up the issue of peace and development in Africa as part of the agenda of that meeting. My country welcomes the decision taken by the G8 to provide $60 billion in assistance to combat AIDS, malaria, tuberculosis and other pandemics in Africa.

Implementing that decision — and the progress made in other areas, such as in effectively liberalizing international trade — should be important steps towards achieving the development goals set by the international community. To that end, we believe that it is essential that the entire international community — and developed countries in particular — becomes more involved and honour the commitments undertaken at the 2000 Millennium Summit, the 2002 Monterrey International Conference on Financing for Development, the 2002 Johannesburg World Summit on Sustainable Development and the 2005 World Summit.

In that regard, we are pleased to note that there were a number of encouraging signs during the high-level dialogue on climate change held at the United Nations last week. That illustrates that there is now a collective awareness of the reality of the threat to humankind posed by climate change and of its correlation with the issue of development. In that connection, I would like to emphasize the central role that should be played by the United Nations in carrying out negotiations in advance of the Conference of States Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, which is to be held in Bali, so as to ensure that the meeting produces a global regime to replace the Kyoto Protocol upon its expiry, in 2012. That regime should include an emissions reduction strategy that is fair, effective and equitable and based on the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities. In essence, it is a matter of safeguarding the interests of developing countries, especially African countries, which pollute the least but are the most exposed to the effects of climate change.

We are determined to continue our active participation in the international effort to protect the environment. Algeria has made its energy strategy part of its sustainable development policy by deciding to promote renewable sources of energy.

I am also pleased to note that, on 5 June 2006, Algeria had the distinct honour of hosting the festivities for World Environment Day. In addition, from 17 to 19 December 2006, we hosted the Joint International Conference on Desertification, which was held to mark the end of the International Year of Deserts and Desertification, an issue which is linked to that of climate change.

Algeria has embraced the Millennium Declaration and has spared no effort to take concrete steps through its national development policies. We are also working within the context of NEPAD to promote all efforts that will contribute to development on the African continent.

Consolidating domestic reforms by strengthening democracy and the rule of law as important elements of good governance stems from our desire to modernize our country, economy and society. In that vein, Algeria has voluntarily agreed to peer review under the African evaluation Mechanism established for that purpose. That undertaking is part of Africa's efforts to contribute concretely to strengthening good governance in every country of Africa, and in the continent as a whole.

A report was presented to heads of States members of the African Peer Review Mechanism meeting at Accra in June 2007. Among other things, the report underscored Algeria's great socio-economic progress. It also welcomed the steps that have been taken to achieve national reconciliation, which were the result of a courageous and visionary political decision taken by President Abdelaziz Bouteflika that has now been realized through a popular referendum that reaffirmed a very broad-based desire for reconciliation.

In conclusion, allow me to point out that in 2005, when we commemorated the sixtieth anniversary of the founding of the United Nations, we charted a course to

undertake genuine reorganization in the architecture of international relations by adapting the Organization to the world we live in today. Only an Organization that is effective, just and credible will be able to meet the demands brought about by change and to rise to the challenges produced by the turbulence of today's world in order to ensure peace, security and development for future generations. That is Algeria's firm conviction, as well as that of the entire international community.

The President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Aboubakr A. Al-Qirbi, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Yemen.

Mr. Al-Qirbi (Yemen) (*spoke in Arabic*): Allow me at the outset, Sir, to congratulate you on your election as President of the General Assembly at its sixty-second session. I am confident that, with your wisdom and experience, you will lead our work to success. I wish you every success. I also wish to commend Her Excellency Sheikha Haya Rashed Al-Khalifa, from the sisterly Kingdom of Bahrain, President of the General Assembly at its sixty-first session, for all her constructive and concrete efforts to ensure the success and positive results of the Assembly's work.

The sixty-second session of the General Assembly coincides with the sixtieth anniversary of my country's joining the United Nations, on 30 September 1947. The Republic of Yemen was one of the first countries to realize the importance of participating and interacting in an international forum that serves noble human objectives, the reason for which this Organization was established. We also became aware of the role of the United Nations in safeguarding international peace and security and in promoting cooperation among Member States with the aim of achieving prosperity for all societies.

On this occasion, I cannot fail to refer to the transformations that the Republic of Yemen has undergone since its inception on 22 May 1990, be it in human development, freedoms, democracy or protection of human rights. However, during the past two years in particular we have had significant success in establishing good governance and enlisting popular participation in local council elections, and we have embarked on an integrated ambitious programme for economic, political, social, judicial and administrative reform. This has come to be known as the National Reform Agenda.

The presidential and local elections held in September 2006, the transparency and fairness of which were attested to by all international observers, are evidence of the practice of democracy, freedom of expression, peaceful change of government, political pluralism, and decentralization in the management of State affairs. Yemen has also granted local councils broad authority. Several pieces of legislation to combat corruption were passed by the Yemeni Parliament, including the establishment of a Supreme Anti-Corruption Commission. They deal with procurement, tenders and bidding, and the establishment of an independent Commission, financial disclosure for public servants and basic reform in the judiciary. The Government now seeks to amend the laws that govern the press in order to remove all constraints.

Yemen has acceded to several international agreements relating to the fight against corruption, including the initiative of international transparency in the mining and extraction industry sector.

Today the world is witnessing political changes in Yemen: freedom of expression and of demonstration for its citizens, accorded to them by the constitution and by law. Even though some people have used these freedoms to cause anarchy and violence, the Government has dealt with them in consonance with the constitution and the law.

I reiterate that my country abides by the approach that it decreed for itself: democracy, political pluralism, peaceful change of authority and recourse to the ballot box as the best and only way for change. It is worth recalling here that the Government of Yemen has declared its intention to amend the constitution so as to reduce the presidential term of office from seven to five years and the term of office of Parliament members from six to four years. It also intends to amend the law pertaining to local administration, so that governors would be elected directly, and to turn local administration into local government, so that more decentralization and participation in governance can be realized.

As it moves along this path, Yemen faces several challenges in the areas of development, poverty and unemployment. These challenges compel Yemen to call on other States and on international organizations to help it overcome obstacles and to increase their development aid to Yemen, especially as the per capita

assistance provided to the Yemeni individual does not meet the internationally accepted standard.

No one today questions the existence of global warming, the results of climate change that the world is experiencing, or the damage that is being inflicted on the environment. Hence, it is only natural to stress that we should all assume our common responsibility to contain the damage caused by some wrong-headed policies and practices, given that the devastating effects of such policies are evident to each and every one of us. Over the past year we have seen floods, hurricanes and global warming in many regions of the world. The future has in store more catastrophes that may affect or wipe out millions of people, especially in the third world. Consequently, the poor would continue to pay for the luxuries of the rich.

We would like to recall all the agreements relative to the environment and the resolutions that have been adopted at conferences to protect it. We should therefore seek to contain the climatic changes that result in desertification and flooding.

The tense situation in the Palestinian territories and the violence the Palestinian people are facing from the Israelis are matters that run contrary to the provisions of the United Nations Charter, international law, international agreements, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Fourth Geneva Convention. While the Arabs in the past have been criticized for not providing an Arab vision to put an end to the Arab-Israeli conflict, they were indeed surprised that, when they presented their own Arab Peace Initiative, it was totally ignored by Israel and the international community, in spite of all the elements that would secure a comprehensive and just solution to the conflict. Thus, it is our hope that the Arab follow-up committee of the Arab initiative will have created a positive atmosphere leading to an international conference to be held under international supervision to achieve peace in the Middle East. It is also our hope that the United States of America will keep its promise regarding the establishment of the Palestinian State on national soil, with Holy Jerusalem as its capital, based on the principles of total sovereignty, viability, and return of refugees; and we hope that the solution will be widened to include total Israeli withdrawal from the Golan and the Sheba'a farms. We emphasize the importance of the participation of all the parties concerned in the international conference to be held soon.

On this occasion, we call on our Palestinian brothers to return to dialogue, to unite their positions, to abide by the Arab Peace Initiative, to reorganize the Palestinian house in accordance with the constitution and Palestinian legitimacy. I refer here to the recent Yemeni initiative to bring the Palestinian factions together to serve the unity and ambitions of the Palestinian people.

The Republic of Yemen welcomes Security Council resolution 1770 (2007) on Iraq. From this rostrum it calls on the international community to stand with the elected Iraqi Government to extend its authority, to put an end to sectarian violence, to control all the armed militias and to face the terrorist elements that seek to spread anarchy and undermine legitimate resistance and efforts at national reconciliation. We emphasize the necessity for dialogue among all the national groups in Iraq in order to reach a common vision that could restore Iraq's security and stability and its pioneering role in the region. The Republic of Yemen calls on everyone to stop interfering in the internal affairs of Iraq, to respect its unity and Arab character, to put an end to the occupation of its lands and to reject any plan to divide it.

Regarding the Sudan, we welcome its Government's acceptance of an expansion of the forces and mandate of the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur. We support the efforts of the Sudanese Government to restore peace in that region in accordance with the security plan presented by the Security Council, provided that the sovereignty, territorial integrity and unity of the Sudan will never be jeopardized under any pretext.

The Republic of Yemen blesses the reconciliation agreement signed by the Somali factions in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, which came about as a result of African, Arab and international efforts. Yemen calls on all international actors to provide further assistance and support to the Transitional Federal Government in a manner that would enable it to rebuild Somalia. We emphasize the importance of providing enough African peacekeeping forces to stabilize and normalize the security situation in Somalia. That would hasten the withdrawal of Ethiopian forces. As has always been the case, the Republic of Yemen will remain a partner in the reconciliation process, supporting all the parties, rejecting any foreign intervention in Somalia and emphasizing the need for reconstruction in Somalia, with a view to enabling the

Transitional Federal Government to rebuild State institutions.

The Republic of Yemen emphasizes the right of countries to possess nuclear technology for peaceful purposes. It continues to support a special General Assembly declaration of the Middle East as a zone free from all nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction, and resolutions demanding that Israel abide by the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), in order to guarantee the stability of the region and to prevent a nuclear arms race there.

The Republic of Yemen emphasizes the importance of achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), adopted in 2000. We also support the objectives set out in the Monterrey Consensus. My country is convinced that the mobilization of financial resources for development and the effective use of those resources in developing countries and countries in economic transition, are two crucial areas in which true international partnership should be encouraged. It is worth mentioning that the responsibility of creating and managing development programmes is first and foremost the responsibility of national Governments, in accordance with their priorities, needs and specificities, and in keeping with international strategies stemming from the Millennium Development Goals. This should take place in partnership with donor countries and international organizations, and in accordance with national goals and programmes devoted to human development.

The Republic of Yemen wants the human being to be the centre and goal of its development and has placed the MDGs high among the priorities of its policies and its five-year development plan for the period 2006-2010. It has strenuously sought to take the social, economic and environmental dimensions of development into consideration. It has also involved civil society organizations in implementing these strategies. In addition, my country is working with donor countries, international specialized agencies and other institutions to implement our third five-year plan, with the objective of alleviating poverty by supporting small-scale programmes, expanding technical education, enabling women, providing investment services and opportunities and strengthening good governance. This is an ambitious plan that requires international support if it is to fully achieve its objectives of bringing about a qualitative change in human development in Yemen.

There have been difficulties, however, in the implementation of this ambitious reform programme, including frequent increases in the price of food stuffs, such as wheat flour, which has affected the standard of living of Yemeni citizens, placing increasingly heavy burdens on them. Accordingly, it is incumbent on rich States to consider how to deal with inflation in international markets, so that countries' efforts to implement their reform programmes will not be jeopardized and so that those countries can strike a balance between the costs of reform on the one hand and living standards, social peace and political stability on the other.

In conclusion, allow me to express on behalf of the Government of the Republic of Yemen our deep thanks to the Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. Ban Ki-moon, for his sincere and strenuous efforts at the helm of the Organization. We are confident that he is capable of leading it with a view to bringing about justice and fulfilling the principles and values of the United Nations to which we all aspire. We look forward to his continued leadership, especially in the search for a just and comprehensive peace in the Middle East.

The President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Pranab Mukherjee, Minister for External Affairs of India.

Mr. Mukherjee (India): Kindly accept my congratulations, Sir, on your election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its sixty-second session. My delegation assures you of its full cooperation as we address issues identified in the annual report of the Secretary-General (A/62/1) and as we responsibly and creatively move forward with pending reforms of the Organization.

At the outset I would like to express India's deep gratitude to all Member States for the recent unanimous adoption by the General Assembly of resolution 61/271, deciding to annually observe the International Day of Non-Violence, on 2 October, the anniversary of the birth of Mahatma Gandhi. I also look forward to participation by Member States in the informal plenary meeting of the General Assembly and other functions being organized tomorrow at the United Nations to mark the first International Day of Non-Violence.

A central topic for this year's debate — responding to climate change — is both timely and relevant. India's views on it were recently set forth at the high-level event on climate change, which took place here on 24 September. Combined with the exchange of views in the general debate, it will no doubt provide a useful backdrop to the meeting of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change to be held later this year in Bali, Indonesia.

The impact of climate change and environmental degradation falls disproportionately upon developing countries. Developing countries are the most vulnerable to it, and also lack the means to tackle it. Measures to address climate change must be based on mitigation and adaptation strategies with fair burden-sharing and measures to realize sustainable patterns of consumption and production. The process of burden-sharing must also take into account where the primary responsibility for the present state of greenhouse gas concentration in the atmosphere rests and not foreclose rapid and sustained economic development for the developing world, which, in any case, is an imperative for adaptation.

Technology is the other key area that needs to be addressed. It is important that critical clean technologies be made available and affordable to developing countries. The intellectual property rights regime must balance rewards for innovators with the common good of humankind. Concerted international action to address climate change, in accordance with the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities, as well as national circumstances and social and economic conditions, is the need of the hour. India, for which energy security is a national imperative, has a very small individual carbon footprint, with per capita carbon dioxide emissions at just about a quarter of the world's average. Even so, we are determined that, as we pursue economic growth, our per capita greenhouse gas emissions will not increase beyond those of the industrial countries.

Poverty and underdevelopment are amongst the central challenges of our times. The overarching requirement is for sustained economic growth to eradicate poverty in developing countries. However, economic growth must also be measured against the template of social inclusion. Growth alone is not enough if it does not produce benefits that are sufficiently dispersed, not only in terms of increased income and employment, but also for improved health, nutrition and education for all.

I affirm India's resolve to achieve the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals. The Government of India accords the highest priority to inclusive growth, including the political, legal, educational and economic empowerment of women, effective and affordable public health, and enhanced access to educational opportunities, especially for all those who are disadvantaged.

It is apparent that progress in the achievement of the internationally agreed development goals has been tardy. The international community, through the United Nations system, must more effectively support the efforts of developing countries to achieve the development goals. A comprehensive reform of the international financial architecture is a key ingredient in that process. The United Nations must play an important role in overseeing the reform of the international financial architecture. That should include measures to ensure a greater voice for and participation by developing countries in the Bretton Woods institutions. The process of reform must be carried to its logical conclusion if the credibility of those institutions is to be enhanced.

We must also address as a priority the regrettable inversion of global resource flows. Today, instead of the urgently needed inflow of resources to developing countries to buttress their national economic development plans, we are confronted with a net outflow from them. Official development assistance (ODA) showed a marked fall during 2006 and remains well below the target of 0.7 per cent of gross national product. It is primarily being used to finance debt relief. That this is happening after so many years of liberalization and globalization highlights our collective failure. Perhaps we should be considering mechanisms, such as an international debt commission, to redress the problem of developing country debt.

The least developed countries, which are particularly hard hit by rising energy costs, find themselves in an even more difficult situation. Enhanced and predictable resource flow to developing countries remains a key objective of the global partnership for development. India will continue to do what it can to help with capacity-building in other developing countries and to assist them through ODA

within the limits of its capacity. By the end of the year, imports from least developed countries into India will face a zero-tariff regime.

Early and substantive progress at the Doha Round of trade negotiations, based on the primacy of the development dimension, is another imperative. We must return to the negotiating table with a redoubled sense of urgency, while recognizing that adherence to the existing mandate remains critical. Nor can the interests of subsistence farmers be ignored or equated with those of other sectors. An illogical linkage between agriculture and non-agricultural market access will only complicate the development impact of the Round. The overarching principle of special and differential treatment for developing countries remains a categorical imperative.

As part of India's commitment to the achievement of human rights for all, and as a member of the Human Rights Council, we remain actively involved in developing the institutional framework of that body, including the universal periodic review mechanism, based on effective international cooperation as a central principle in the Council's methods of work. India will work towards developing an international normative framework for the promotion and protection of human rights. India is honoured to be one of the first signatories of the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance. Earlier today, I also had the honour of depositing India's instrument of ratification of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

As the largest democracy in the world, India has developed a system of local self-government with democratically elected institutions of representative Government at all levels — the village, the district, the State and the nation. The effort to make participatory democracy more meaningful to every Indian citizen underpins what is perhaps one of the greatest social experiments in the world today, namely, the transfer of decision-making power to nearly one million elected women local Government representatives. As a result, women are not merely the beneficiaries of change in India, but are its instruments.

As the world's largest democracy, it was also natural for India to support the establishment of the United Nations Democracy Fund. We made an initial contribution of $10 million to the Fund and remain actively and constructively involved in realizing the objectives for which it was set up. As a small token of our commitment to that laudable initiative, I have the privilege of announcing a further pledge of $10 million to the United Nations Democracy Fund.

The international system cannot be reordered meaningfully without a comprehensive reform of the United Nations. If the Organization is to remain the cornerstone of the international architecture in this century, it cannot remain mired in the realities of the 1940s. Despite substantive implementation of the United Nations reform agenda that emerged from the 2005 World Summit Outcome, such reform will inevitably remain incomplete without comprehensive reform and expansion of the Security Council and revitalization of the General Assembly. Elements and ideas on the reform of the Security Council have been discussed for well over a decade in numerous reports and interminable consultations. It is now time for intergovernmental negotiations to commence in order to make the Security Council more democratic, representative and responsive.

We, together with partners from Africa, Latin America and Asia, tabled a resolution on 11 September 2007, spelling out the principles on which reform ought to be based if it is to be meaningful. These principles are expansion in both permanent and non-permanent categories of membership; greater representation for developing countries and representation for developed countries that is reflective of contemporary world realities; and comprehensive improvement in the working methods of the Security Council, including ensuring greater access for island and small States. We welcome recent statements from this podium by President Bush of the United States of America and other world leaders on the need for Security Council reform in both the permanent and non-permanent categories. It is high time that we collectively bring these ideas to implementation.

Reform of the United Nations would also be incomplete without revitalization of the General Assembly. The central goal of such revitalization must be the restoration and enhancement of the role and authority of the General Assembly as originally envisaged in the Charter.

Given the significance of developmental activities for the developing world, India sees a corresponding need for the reform of United Nations

operational activities in favour of development. Since these activities are aimed at supporting the work of Member States, it follows that Members must determine their direction and shape through an intergovernmental process. The litmus test for any reform proposal is whether it improves the support extended by the United Nations to the efforts of programme countries. India would therefore judge reform proposals by their impact on the ground, by the resultant improvement in the effectiveness of the system and by the impact on transaction costs for the United Nations development system.

Steps to achieve the complete elimination of nuclear weapons have also only made limited headway. Despite some progress, the world remains far from achieving the objective of total elimination of nuclear weapons. India's long-standing commitment to universal, non-discriminatory and comprehensive nuclear disarmament is embodied in the vision of late Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi for a nuclear-free and non-violent world. This vision was put forward nearly two decades ago. It remains undiminished today.

Indeed, it is all the more relevant today, given the fact that peaceful uses of nuclear energy can address the inexorably growing demand for new and non-polluting sources of energy to fuel economic development. We will be bringing proposals to Member States and this Organization to see how we can refocus on general and complete disarmament, particularly nuclear disarmament. Disarmament is our agreed goal, and it subsumes arms control and non-proliferation.

It is well known that India has an impeccable record in preventing the proliferation of sensitive technologies. That is in keeping with our commitment to being a responsible nuclear Power. India is ready to work with the international community to develop a new international consensus on non-proliferation. The international community needs to intensify the effort to address the very real threat posed by the link between the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMDs) and related materials and technologies and the ability of non-State actors to acquire them. The risk posed by the intersection between proliferation and terrorism is real and serious. The central objective must be to ensure that our solidarity in words is translated into action.

The adoption of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy last September was a noteworthy development, signalling the will of the international community to combat this menace in a holistic and coordinated manner. Welcome as the Strategy is, there is much more that needs to be done to combat the menace that international terrorism has become. India is convinced that without the early adoption of a comprehensive convention against international terrorism, the global struggle against terrorism remains incomplete and likely to succeed only partially. We must ensure that there is zero tolerance for all forms of terrorism.

In conclusion, I would express the hope that our deliberations in the year ahead will lead us to enlightened action. With maturity and resolve we will successfully overcome the many challenges before us.

The President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Patteson Oti, Minister for Foreign Affairs, External Trade and Immigration of Solomon Islands.

Mr. Oti (Solomon Islands): Mr. President, I am privileged to stand before you today in the place of my Prime Minister, Mr. Manasseh Sogavare, to renew the firm commitment of the Government and the people of Solomon Islands to the principles, ideals and values that gather us together here annually for their re-examination and reaffirmation. The privilege of membership in the United Nations allows my country to sit amongst Member States and stand up for, as well as against, decisions on issues that either unite or divide us. Belonging to this Organization for almost half the time it has existed is a proud feat for a country that is barely 30 years old. The experience of nearly three decades of sovereign statehood has taught Solomon Islands many lessons that we can share with the rest of the world. In particular, we are well placed to highlight the fragility of our independence as a nation of peoples whose survival is both threatened and guaranteed by our interdependence with the international community as represented in this Assembly.

Mr. President,, representing my Prime Minister and addressing this Assembly on behalf of more than the half a million people of Solomon Islands, I wish to begin by congratulating you on your recent election as President of the General Assembly at our sixty-second session. Both you and Secretary General Ban Ki-moon have been selected by fate to pledge your devotion to

duty in a cause challenged by humanity's survival. We trust you to do what is right to attain the best for the rest of us. Your distinguished predecessors have paved pathways for the progress of this Organization along many routes which you must now travel to fulfil our Charter's promises to us and those whom we are fortunate to represent.

Mr. Jallow (Gambia), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Much has happened in Solomon Islands since my Prime Minister's address to this Assembly in September last year. Turning firstly to cataclysmic events, just six months ago, a series of earthquakes and tsunamis terrorized, devastated and swallowed up some of our islands, their inhabitants, homes, gardens, animals and worldly possessions. From that catastrophe alone, we suffered the loss of more than 50 lives and injury to countless more, the total destruction of over 3,240 homes and severe damage to another 3,000 homes. The damage bill is estimated to exceed $100 million. Thanks to the instantly televised news coverage of the devastation, the entire world was shown graphic evidence of the sinking of some of our islands, the elevation of submerged reefs 3 metres above sea level and the submersion of many coastal lands.

Not visible at the time were the immediate and future effects of nature's structural adjustments on the daily livelihoods of Solomon Islanders. Traditional fishing grounds have shifted. Agricultural activities have had to be relocated. The debris is slowly being cleared. The water supply is being restored. Roads, wharves and bridges are being rebuilt and hospitals, clinics, schools and houses are being repaired or reconstructed. Entire villages will need to be relocated and rebuilt. Life can no longer be the same for the vast majority of our people in rural areas, who depend on fishing and subsistence agriculture for their daily survival. Any slight tremor or vibration causes them to flee to higher ground in panic. The emotional and psychological effects of nature's non-negotiable terrors are what our people have to struggle with for the rest of their lives.

My snapshot of the April earthquakes and tsunamis and of their aftermath would not be complete if I did not acknowledge and place on record the eternal gratitude of Solomon Islands to all those Governments, international organizations and peoples who offered sympathy, prayers and a helping hand through the humanitarian relief that was dispatched to our affected areas. Without the assistance and involvement of all those who volunteered their time and resources and the generosity of those who donated emergency relief funds, supplies and provisions, my Government would not have progressed to the rehabilitation phase of the disaster recovery programme as fast as we have. It is at this time of suffering and need that we appreciate the true value of human compassion and sacrifice.

With the increasing incidence of disasters all over the world, we must bolster the resources of the United Nations humanitarian relief programme and its capacity to respond rapidly and effectively to such crises to alleviate human suffering. As much as we appreciate the quantum of funds pledged by sympathetic individuals, institutions and nation-States, we are left to wonder whether the filtering of donor financial assistance through national charitable organizations is calculated to whittle down its value through the consumption of largesse in its delivery and administration. Respecting the generosity and altruism of those who give and the desperation of those who need requires that we enshrine the principles of efficiency and effectiveness to guide humanitarian relief efforts across international borders. Human charity and human suffering are done a disservice when disasters create "feeding frenzies" for non-governmental charitable organizations. The recent experience of Solomon Islands mirrors what many other nations have undergone and underlines the need for concerted international action to regulate the collection and delivery of humanitarian aid.

Dealing with the effects of environmental catastrophes rather than their causes takes us only half as far as we ought to go. The proceedings of last week's High-level Event on Climate Change have emboldened small island developing States to rally together to demand the intensification of international efforts to curb global environmental recklessness.

It appears that the fragility of States such as Solomon Islands has less to do with the quality of our governance machinery and more to do with our ecological vulnerability. My Government wonders: what is so virtuous about foreign aid when billions of dollars can be spent on improving the governance structures of an economy that derives its export income from the destruction of tropical forests, when just a

fraction of that expense is all that is needed to preserve our forests and finance our annual national budgets? Solomon Islands believes that the protection of our global environment is a matter of international responsibility and that it can be capably addressed through the enunciation of principles that dictate reciprocal undertakings aimed at the continued granting and receipt of foreign aid.

I now turn to the ongoing disputes concerning the future occupation of Solomon Islands by the Australian-led visiting contingent. My Government has initiated a parliamentary review of the legislative basis for the continued presence of the occupying police, military and civilian personnel from our neighbouring countries. Credit must, however, be given to the visiting forces deployed in 2003 to restore law and order in Solomon Islands following many years of ethnic rivalry and violence. The policing of the crisis for four years has contained it on the surface, without addressing the underlying socio-cultural roots of dissension. My Government is determined to delve deeper into the historical causes of the friction between our peoples and to do what is necessary to resolve the disputes that prevent their reconciliation.

The Commission of Inquiry into the April 2006 Civil Unrest in Honiara — capital of Solomon Islands — whose establishment was announced by the Prime Minister during his most recent address to the Assembly (see A/61/PV.17), finally became functional this year after the failure of externally orchestrated manoeuvres to derail it. The Commission of Inquiry's interim reports have exposed major flaws in our national security operations. My Government appreciates the support of and the financial assistance pledged by Papua New Guinea in staffing the Commission of Inquiry. The Commission's final report and recommendations should be available in the next few months.

Our people's gratitude to Australia and New Zealand for financing the deployment of their nationals to police our crisis with the help of a small contingent of personnel from neighbouring Pacific island nations is often expressed and is genuine. However, as our fellow Pacific island States can readily appreciate, our sovereign right to determine the terms under which the Government of Solomon Islands will permit our continued occupation by the visiting contingent cannot be undermined by any Member of the United Nations.

The long neglect of our internal problem by the United Nations, followed by the hasty conclusion of the regionally based multilateral agreement, which led to the dispatch of the initial visiting contingent of Australian, New Zealand and other Pacific island forces, have caused the ongoing controversies concerning their continued existence and eventual return to the Organization's doorstep. Viewed from the perspective of Chapter VIII of the Charter, the nature of the arrangements and activities embraced by the 2003 agreement, as well as their practical application and operation since that time, appear to transgress Article 52 of the Charter as a result of apparent inconsistencies with Articles 1 and 2.

However disguised and rationalized, intervention and occupation allow assisting nations to spend and earn substantial revenue for their supporting businesses and industries. My Government is too nationalistic to become captive to the fortunes that justify our perpetual retention under a state of siege. My Prime Minister and my fellow ministers and parliamentarians remain unmoved by Australian resistance to our attempts to reclaim our sovereignty and independence.

In keeping with our obligations under Article 54, we shall keep the Security Council fully informed of the activities undertaken under the 2003 agreement and shall seek its assistance in reducing the financial burdens that Australia and New Zealand needlessly bear under the current arrangements.

As members of the Assembly know only too well, those who pay the piper call the tune. Our experience with the Australian-designed cooperative intervention package demonstrates the need for greater United Nations involvement in the leadership of future regional peacekeeping operations.

The impetus for Australia's involvement in our internal unrest was a dramatic change of focus and heart concerning the protection of its strategic interests in the Pacific region. The threat of terrorist penetration through porous frontiers is sufficient cause for international anxiety, insecurity and sometimes paranoia. Despite global condemnation of terrorism, the struggle for consensus on an acceptable definition of terrorism retards the progress of multilateral initiatives in the formulation of a comprehensive anti-terrorism convention.

Illustrative of the potential for overreaction to terrorism is the indignity that I, as Foreign Minister of

Solomon Islands, had to suffer when my multiple-entry visa to Australia was suddenly cancelled last year. The written explanation for that decision identified me as a risk to the health, safety or good order of the Australian community under Section 116 (1) (e) of its Migration Act. One would have to admit that that is an incredible justification for excluding democratically elected leaders of neighbouring countries not known for breeding terrorists. Just over a century ago, many of our ancestors were kidnapped and forcibly taken to work as labourers in a country that is now quick to regard their descendants as terrorists. Defining terrorism has proved to be more difficult than deploring it.

Moving from the preoccupations of the past year to our perennial protestations, Solomon Islands is compelled by principle, rather than pragmatism, to ventilate again our people's concerns arising from the non-representation of the Government and people of Taiwan in this Assembly. Our recent attempts to channel Taiwan's application for admission through the established gateways was resisted — without any regard for the legitimate quest of 23 million Taiwanese people for self-determination — by fellow Member States committed to upholding a peremptory rule of international law also enshrined in Article 1 of the Charter of the United Nations. Organized international hypocrisy is the only basis for explaining the indignity that the Taiwanese people must suffer at the hands of a powerful constellation of States interested only in the protection of trade and investment and not any humanitarian concerns.

China's assertion of sovereignty over Taiwan must be the pretence that it invariably is, since most of its major trading partners have also forged and maintain bilateral relations with Taiwan, which are ultimately predicated on politico-juridical autonomy. Solomon Islanders have a native empathy for all people who are struggling to reclaim what is rightfully due to them under international law. Our support for their struggle stems from our convictions about what is right and just. Our sovereign conscience is not a tradable commodity. Our rejection of regular approaches for the reconsideration of our existing allegiances to Taiwan is premised on our preference, ideally, to recognize both China and Taiwan on a realistic rather than an imaginary politico-juridical footing.

This Assembly is the forum in which mutual respect and goodwill prevail and enable us to implore China, as one of the oldest civilizations of our world, to pledge its non-resort to force in settling the disputed question of its sovereignty over Taiwan.

As one of Taiwan's long-standing diplomatic allies, and undeterred by the result recently engineered by international political pragmatism, Solomon Islands cannot shirk its Charter obligations under Article 35, paragraph 1, to bring to the attention of this Assembly the situation currently prevailing between Taiwan and China. The situation is clearly of a nature requiring investigation by the Security Council, pursuant to Article 34, on the basis that it "might lead to international friction or give rise to a dispute". The Security Council is obliged to investigate the situation in order to determine whether the continuance thereof is likely to endanger the maintenance of international peace and security.

Having now brought the situation to the attention of this Assembly, Solomon Islands expects that we will follow the stipulations of Article 11, paragraph 2, in discussing any questions relating to the maintenance of international peace and security and making the necessary recommendations or taking the requisite action that this Assembly is empowered to make and take under the applicable provisions of the Charter. A full, frank and fair discussion of the situation is the least the Assembly can undertake to affirm our faithful obedience to our Charter's creed and satisfy ourselves as to the existence of grounds for our further proactive involvement.

Led by Prime Minister Manasseh Sogavare, my Government belongs to a constituency of States for whom the United Nations represents the promise of hope for civilizations condemned by circumstance to eternal misery. The effective representation of our hope, voice and vision in this Organization can be achieved only by the reform of its governance structures to reflect the changing configurations of geopolitical power and influence. Solomon Islands therefore supports the proposal for the enlargement of the Security Council. We also believe that India and Japan must be allocated permanent seats on the Council.

The attainment of the Millennium Development Goals will remain elusive for many nations unless innovative strategies for debt conversion and cancellation are devised and adopted to fast-track the poor's exit from poverty. We look forward to exploring

that prospect at the forthcoming meeting on financing for development in Doha.

Solomon Islands has reason to register its disappointment with the Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea for its tardy action in releasing funds that are payable to us from the Trust Fund for Special Aspects of the Implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea to defray the costs and expenses of establishing our sovereign claims to continental shelf areas registrable under article 76 of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. We are concerned that any further delay in accessing those funds might affect our registration entitlements due to non-compliance with time restrictions.

Time deprives me of the opportunity to chronicle many more grievances that we needlessly experience in securing the benefits accorded us by virtue of our membership in this Organization. The appointment of the Deputy Resident Representative of the United Nations Development Programme, stationed in the Solomon Islands, is a welcome sign of the United Nations interest in my country's problems and permits us to interact more closely with the Organization in prioritizing the remedial action we need to undertake for the betterment of the lives of our population. With a visible presence in our midst and on our shores, the United Nations will no longer be remote from the consciousness of the people it exists to serve.

Before I conclude, allow me to take this opportunity to extend to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon my Prime Minister's invitation to visit our shores during his tenure in office. We sincerely hope His Excellency will honour the Government and people of Solomon Islands by becoming the first Secretary-General to venture to my country.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Abdurrahman Mohamed Shalgham, Secretary of the General People's Committee for Foreign Liaison and International Cooperation of the Socialist People's Libyan Arab Jamahiriya.

Mr. Shalgham (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to congratulate the President on his election as President of the General Assembly at its sixty-second session. I am confident that, thanks to his experience and wisdom, he will lead the work of this forum to the best results. I would also like to take this opportunity to express our satisfaction with the manner in which Sheikha Haya Rashed Al-Khalifa conducted the deliberations of the General Assembly at its previous session and the efforts she made for United Nations reform and, with regard to several controversial issues, to arrive at solutions acceptable to all. I also wish to express our gratitude for the efforts exerted by His Excellency Mr. Ban Ki-moon, since his appointment as Secretary-General, to implement the resolutions of the United Nations and to achieve the purposes of the Charter.

The reform of the United Nations has been the central issue in our deliberations in the General Assembly and in a number of other forums over the past two years. We were able to move forward towards achieving our goals on some aspects of the reform process. However, there is still a long way to go, especially in the absence of real progress towards reforming the Security Council and enhancing the role of the General Assembly.

That issue has been the subject of intensive consultations in which many ideas were put forward, some of which were realistic and based on the principles of equal sovereignty for all nations and equitable geographical representation. Other ideas, however, involved consolidating the control of the powerful States over the United Nations bodies and the concept that those with privileges in the Security Council should maintain those privileges and reject any active role for other actors in that respect. That latter attitude cannot lead to any true reform contributing to the realization of the purposes embodied in the Charter of the United Nations.

A realistic assessment of progress made in the process of United Nations reform, especially in light of the impasse in negotiations regarding Security Council reform, leads us to the conviction that there is an urgent need for a new world summit conference that would push forward the reform process and bring to a conclusion the work that we began two years ago.

In order to achieve this, Libya calls, from this podium, for a high-level summit meeting to be held at the United Nations in Geneva within the framework of the sixty-third session of the General Assembly, in 2008. Such a meeting would be devoted to the reform process of the United Nations and the expansion of the Security Council. Holding such an important meeting in Geneva, a city that lies at the centre of the world, would provide the opportunity for all world leaders to

attend, to present constructive proposals and to participate in decision-making regarding this thorny issue that concerns the entire world.

True reform of the United Nations means putting decision-making powers in the hands of all of its Members, that is to say, in the hands of the General Assembly, where all countries have equal vote. The Security Council would thus become an instrument for implementing General Assembly resolutions and we would overcome the obstacles caused by the veto, which puts international decision-making power in the hands of the permanent members of the Security Council and greatly encourages selectivity and double standards in dealing with international problems.

In our efforts to reform the Security Council, we must consider a new formula for permanent membership in which membership would be awarded to geographical groups and not to specific countries. In this regard, we demand that the African Union — since Africa is the only continent which has no representative among the permanent members — be granted permanent membership in the Security Council with all the privileges enjoyed by other permanent members.

While we encourage the current negotiations regarding reform of the Security Council, we stress the fact that Libya adheres to the Common African Position, issued at the fifth African Union Summit, held in Sirte on 4 and 5 July 2005. This position was confirmed at subsequent African Union summit conferences. It calls for the African continent to be granted five non-permanent seats and two permanent seats with all the privileges that other permanent members enjoy, including the right of veto.

Libya seeks the support of all Member States for a seat on the Security Council so that it may continue to carry out its efforts to achieve the objectives of the United Nations, building on its experience of non-permanent membership in 1976 and 1977. Libya has therefore submitted its candidature for non-permanent membership for the coming period 2008-2009. This candidature enjoys the support of the African Union as expressed in its resolution EX.CL/DEC. 308 (IX) issued in Banjul on 29 June 2007, of the Organization of the Islamic Conference in its resolution ORG 33/2 issued in Baku on 21 June 2006 and of the Arab League in its resolution on 6 September 2006.

Libya's firm commitment to the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter, its notable contribution to international peace and security and its support for development, especially in Africa, demonstrate that Libya is highly qualified for membership in the Security Council.

As a member of the Council, Libya would strive to emphasize the central role played by the United Nations in achieving international peace and security; to strengthen respect for international law and the provisions of the United Nations Charter; to enhance pluralism in international relations through the United Nations; to strengthen cooperation between the United Nations and regional organizations in solving international problems; to contribute to United Nations reform; to work to increase cooperation and coordination between the Security Council and the other organs of the United Nations, particularly the General Assembly; to encourage swift and effective international cooperation and coordination in disaster management and in the protection of human rights; to contribute to the creation of permanent solutions to international problems based on justice, equity, and respect for the principles of international law and to encourage further cooperation between the United Nations and the African Union in the areas of conflict resolution, consolidation of peace and support for development in Africa.

Libya strongly believes in the objectives of the United Nations and consistently meets its obligations to the Organization. Among Member States, Libya was the second-largest African contributor to the United Nations budget and to the budget of peacekeeping operations in the biennium 2004-2006. Furthermore, Libya provides a large share of voluntary contributions to serve the goals of the United Nations.

Moreover, Libya is one of the countries that have most often resorted to the mechanisms of the United Nations to resolve international disagreements. For example, it resorted to the International Court of Justice to resolve its border problems with Chad, Tunisia and Malta and has accepted and implemented the rulings of the Court.

Libya has been a key mediator in the resolution of a number of conflicts and disputes, especially in Africa, and has dispatched peacekeeping forces to the Central African Republic, monitored the border between Chad and the Sudan and taken part in the

United Nations mission in Darfur. Libya has also begun to nominate personnel from the Libyan police force to serve in United Nations missions in a number of African places.

Libya has established partnerships with a number of countries, in the field of development, particularly in Africa. Additionally, in cooperation with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, Libya is implementing numerous projects that provide food in a number of African and Arab States.

In cooperation with Cuba and Nigeria, Libya established the South-South Programme for health care in Africa and, in 2006, launched the Gaddafi Programme for African women, children and young people, which provides health care and educational services in Africa.

Libya has provided humanitarian aid to numerous countries in order to alleviate the effects of disasters. Recipient countries have included Niger, Chad, the Sudan, Somalia, Palestine, Indonesia, Pakistan and Mauritania. Libya has also provided substantial aid to several African countries to combat desert locusts.

In the field of disarmament, Libya believes that comprehensive and complete disarmament, beginning with the elimination of weapons of mass destruction (WMDs), is an essential prerequisite for the consolidation of international peace and security. For this reason, Libya initiated its voluntary abandonment of all programmes related to WMDs and their means of delivery. Libya hopes that all nations that possess such weapons or related programmes will follow its exemplary behaviour.

International cooperation, under the auspices of the United Nations, has achieved good results in the fight against terrorism. However, concentrating on the fight against this phenomenon, while ignoring its root causes, will not bring terrorism to an end. Libya was among the first countries that called for coordination of international efforts to fight global terrorism. Since 1992, Libya has called for a special session of the General Assembly to study this phenomenon and to take the necessary measures to combat it by eradicating its root causes.

We believe that the time has come to heed this call and establish a precise definition of terrorism that would protect human rights and halt the practice of confusing terrorism with the legitimate right of people to fight against foreign occupation and to exercise self-determination and attain independence.

Ending terrorism will require practical measures to eliminate its root causes, including effective action to promote human rights for all peoples, putting a stop to acts of aggression and the occupation of the land of others, fighting poverty and encouraging democracy.

Foreign occupation is the worst form of terrorism, because occupation forces subject entire peoples to measures which violate the most basic principles of human rights and commit daily crimes against those peoples in order to maintain their occupation. In our campaign to fight terrorism, it is imperative that we coordinate our efforts to finally put an end to foreign occupation, enable peoples to exercise their right to self-determination and prevent interference in internal affairs.

We urgently need to implement the pledges that we adopted in the Millennium Declaration, the Doha Declaration and the outcomes of the Monterrey and Johannesburg conferences so that we can make ideal use of our planet's resources, end conflict, poverty, illiteracy and disease, provide all people with safe drinking water, safeguard the environment and achieve sustainable development.

It falls upon the shoulders of the United Nations, in particular the Economic and Social Council, to establish international partnerships for development which can achieve the Millennium Development Goals. Such partnerships should facilitate dialogue between North and South on the basis of respect for sovereignty, equality and sharing of benefits, and should ensure that we reach the agreed goal of devoting 0.7 per cent of the developed countries' gross national income to official development assistance (ODA) to developing countries. Such partnerships must likewise ensure the appropriate application of all multilateral free trade principles and must strengthen World Trade Organization measures regarding preferential treatment for developing countries, including making it easier for developing countries to join that organization.

Countries with a colonial past bear the largest share of responsibility to provide aid to developing countries and to compensate them for the damage they suffered during the colonial era. Similarly, countries that waged war on the territories of other countries have a responsibility to remove the mines, unexploded

ordnance and explosive remnants of war they left in those countries. They must provide the necessary maps, equipment and technical know-how to reclaim and rehabilitate damaged land in those developing countries.

I call upon all Member States to aid the African Union in its efforts to ensure that all African countries achieve the Millennium Development Goals.

The Palestinian people have lived in great misery for more than half a century, since their land was seized. More than half of them were displaced to various parts of the world and those who remain have been subjected to a bloody and vicious Israeli occupation and to systematic violations of international humanitarian law: houses are demolished, lands are confiscated and Palestinian agricultural land is bulldozed. Under siege and denied food and medicine, inhabitants are expelled and unarmed citizens killed while the building of an apartheid wall continues. The oppression to which the Palestinian people are subjected and the failure of the United Nations to protect them and to aid them in attaining their rights — the right of return, the right to self-determination and the right to establish an independent State on all Palestinian land — are factors that prevent the restoration of peace and security in the region. It is time to address the issue of Palestine more seriously and to refrain from attempts to impose a fait accompli on the Palestinian people, depriving them of their legitimate rights.

The tragedy that has befallen brotherly Iraq and that has resulted in hundreds of thousands of Iraqi deaths, injuries and refugees, requires an urgent United Nations initiative to stop the bleeding, resolve the crisis, ensure the withdrawal of the occupation forces, restore Iraq's stability and sovereignty, maintain Iraq's territorial integrity and empower the Iraqis to control their own resources and freely decide their own destiny, while enabling all citizens to participate in the administration of their country without the marginalization of any group by any other group, so that peace, security and prosperity may prevail in that country.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Osman Mohammed Saleh, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Eritrea.

Mr. Saleh (Eritrea): Allow me to extend my congratulations to Mr. Srgjan Kerim on his election to the high office of President of the General Assembly at its sixty-second session. I would also like to recognize Sheikha Haya Rashed Al-Khalifa of Bahrain for her distinguished service as President of the Assembly at its sixty-first session.

Please allow me also to extend my appreciation to the Secretary-General, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, for his strong commitment and unceasing efforts in addressing issues of peace and security in many parts of the world where many conflicts and tensions remain unresolved. I wish to assure him of my Government's constructive support and its wholehearted commitment to peace and security in our region.

This session of the General Assembly provides Member States with the opportunity to address the challenges and threats that continue to preoccupy us, including the lack of peace and security and the presence of extreme poverty, underdevelopment, environmental degradation and natural disasters.

In the interest of brevity, let me now revert to more pressing problems closer to home. For the past five years, it has, sadly, become almost a ritual for my Government to urge, from this rostrum, the international community, and especially the Security Council, to shoulder their fundamental responsibilities for the maintenance of peace and security in our part of the world. The legal principles at stake and the looming threat to regional peace and stability have been and remain stark indeed. The hard facts are neither controversial nor ambiguous.

In flagrant breach of international law, the Charter of the United Nations and the Algiers Peace Agreement, Ethiopia continues to occupy sovereign Eritrean territories through military force. Ethiopia continues to reject the final and binding decision of the Eritrea-Ethiopia Boundary Commission (EEBC) and to obstruct the demarcation of the boundary, to which end the international community has deployed the United Nations Mission in Eritrea and Ethiopia (UNMEE) at an annual running cost about $200 million. Ethiopia continues to violate with impunity fundamental principles of international law, including full respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of a fellow United Nations Member State, the integrity of international treaties and the norms of settling disputes through binding arbitration. Those are the indelible facts on the ground that have been and are spawning a

climate of permanent and escalating tension in our part of the world.

Throughout these years, the Boundary Commission has filed no less than 24 reports to the Security Council underlining the gravity of the situation. The EEBC has no independent means or powers of enforcement. The legal authority and powers of enforcement reside, squarely and explicitly, with the Security Council, which is the guarantor of the Algiers Peace Agreement. As such, the United Nations Security Council should long have taken remedial action, both in accordance with Article 14 of the Algiers Peace Agreement as well as on the basis of Article 39 of the United Nations Charter. But that has not happened to date. Ethiopia has managed to frustrate the EEBC decision and the demarcation of the boundary — which should have been completed by 2003 — because of the unwarranted positions of some United Nations Security Council member States, and especially the United States of America, which has regrettably chosen to placate Ethiopia at the expense of international law and the interests of regional peace and security.

It was against the backdrop of Ethiopia's defiance and violation of international law that the Boundary Commission convened a meeting of the parties in The Hague early last month. Ethiopia first sought to prevent the meeting from taking place by raising spurious legal objections to the original venue — New York. And when that bogus pretext was removed and the meeting was convened in The Hague, Ethiopia failed to respond to the five conditions that the Commission had imposed so that it could proceed and embark on the time-bound schedule of operations that had been worked out in order to complete pillar emplacements along the 1000 kilometre border in the coming months. The five conditions that Ethiopia was requested to fulfil were: first, to indicate its unqualified acceptance of the 2002 Delimitation Decision without requiring broader ranging negotiations between the parties; secondly, to lift restrictions on the movement of EEBC personnel; thirdly, to provide security assurances; fourthly, to meet payment arrears and fifthly, to allow free access to pillar locations.

At the Commission's meeting, Eritrea committed itself once again to cooperate with the demarcation in all of the respects regarding which the Commission had expressed concern. Eritrea's commitments were made both in writing and verbally, in front of the Commission and other participants.

Eritrea asks merely that Ethiopia make the same commitment to support the demarcation in accordance with the Commission's legitimate instructions. Ethiopia, however, made it clear that it had no intention of complying with the Commission's demarcation instructions and raised tangential issues, which my delegation has fully addressed in the full text of my statement.

After the recent Boundary Commission meeting in early September in The Hague — which I mentioned — the text of a letter came to Eritrea's attention. The letter had been circulated to the public and the media without communicating it to the Eritrean Government through appropriate diplomatic or legal channel. In the letter the Ethiopian Foreign Minister indicated Ethiopia's intention to attempt to renounce the two Algiers Agreements in accordance with which the Eritrea-Ethiopia border war of 1998-2000 was brought to an end.

The substance of Ethiopia's letter and its timing underscored the fact that the letter was intended simply as another effort to subvert the implementation of the final and binding award of the Eritrea-Ethiopia Boundary Commission. As such, that effort is clearly unlawful under the Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties and other principles of international law, as well as highly detrimental to regional peace and security.

The Vienna Convention does not support Ethiopia's effort to deny legal force to the Commission's award. Even if Ethiopia's renunciation attempts were legally effective — which they are not — Article 70 of the Convention states that the boundary established under the Algiers Agreement remains binding on both parties.

The Vienna Convention cannot simply be interpreted to permit the dissatisfied party in a boundary arbitration to renounce the result retroactively. Indeed, Ethiopia seems to be planning to use its unlawful attempt to renounce the Algiers Agreements in order to renew hostilities. The Algiers Agreements were designed to put an end once and for all to the two States' conflicting claims to territory and thus to leave the two States free to rebuild their relationship for the good of both of their peoples.

In the five and one half years since the Boundary Commission's delimitation decision, however, Ethiopia has repeatedly obstructed implementation of the

decision and threatened to walk out on the process altogether, if it was not given everything that it wanted. While tens of thousands of Eritreans indigenous to the Ethiopian-occupied regions wait in internally displaced persons camps for the chance to peacefully enjoy the benefits of the final and binding award, Ethiopia is moving new settlers onto their land, attempting to make its illegal occupation of Eritrean territory permanent. That is in breach of the Algiers Agreements, in particular the Agreement on Cessation of Hostilities, and Chapter VII of the United Nations Charter should have been invoked to end Ethiopia's flagrant violations with impunity of international law.

Eritrea sincerely hopes that the demarcation process can be restarted, in accordance with international law and consistent with the final and binding delimitation award of 13 April 2002. This is the central tenet of the Algiers Agreements and the key to reinstating regional harmony. It is important for effective action to be taken in the interest of legality and the maintenance of regional peace and security. The United Nations and the Security Council have unequivocal legal and moral responsibilities to ensure that this occurs without further delay and some Powers with major interests in the region need to reassess their policies so that the peoples in the region can live in peace and harmony.

Ethiopia's invasion of Somalia has become a serious concern in our region, and the Security Council and members of the international community must insist on the unconditional and immediate withdrawal of all Ethiopian troops from Somalia in order to end the occupation.

I do not wish to conclude my statement without briefly touching on the progress and the challenges that lie ahead in the peace process in the Sudan. The Sudan has come a long way in addressing its internal conflicts, both by concluding peace agreements and by engaging in the implementation process of the terms and conditions of the peace accords. Eritrea will continue to lend its support to the peace process in Darfur by working closely with all concerned parties and countries, including the United Nations and the African Union, in order to achieve a robust peace package that will bring a lasting solution. In that regard, Eritrea looks forward to the Tripoli meeting later this month.

The Acting President: I give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Nyan Win, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Union of Myanmar.

Mr. Win (Myanmar): At the outset, I would like to congratulate the President on his assumption of the high office of President of the General Assembly at its sixty-second session. I would also like to convey Myanmar's appreciation to his predecessor, Her Excellency Sheikha Haya Rashed Al Khalifa, for her able stewardship of the previous session. The annual report of the Secretary-General reflects the significant work done in the past year by the United Nations in meeting the challenges we face. We congratulate Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his successful first year in office and welcome his timely initiative with regard to such pressing global issues as climate change. The High-level Event on Climate Change has reignited the international community's interest in climate change, and rightly so. Climate change remains the most critical challenge that the international community faces today. The adverse effects of climate change, such as sea-level rise, hurricanes, floods, drought and desertification, particularly in recent years, are a stark reminder of the negative impact that climate change has on the long-term economic and social development of the global community, particularly the developing countries.

To address the adverse impacts of climate change, we need concerted action at the national, regional and international levels. We need to be mindful that climate change is not merely an environmental issue, but also a sustainable development issue. Accordingly, an integrated and coordinated approach is required. For its part, Myanmar is pursuing a national environmental policy based on the sustainable utilization of natural resources. In 1991, we adopted the Myanmar Agenda 21, which serves as an important guideline for both the public and private sectors.

Myanmar also pursues a system of sustainable forest management. We have implemented a nationwide programme of afforestation and reforestation. As a result, we have been able to retain a forest cover of 50 per cent in the country. Myanmar was among the 12 nations that took part in the Asia Least-cost Greenhouse Gas Abatement Strategy in cooperation with the Asian Development Bank. The inventory of greenhouse gas emissions taken under the Strategy confirms that Myanmar is more of a sink than a source of carbon dioxide emissions. The baseline

projection of the 2020 national greenhouse inventory also shows that the forestry sector will continue to be a significant sink in Myanmar in the future.

The economic activities undertaken by developed countries, both historically and currently, are mainly responsible for the emissions of greenhouse gases that affect the global climate system. The developing countries, which are least responsible for contributing to climate change, face the greatest risk from its adverse impacts. Addressing the challenge of climate change requires an integrated approach to economic growth, social development and environmental protection. Concerted action must be taken within the framework of the internationally agreed United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and its Kyoto Protocol, based on the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities. It will require developed countries to provide new and additional financial resources to developing countries and to fulfil the commitments made at various international conferences.

The impact of climate change is particularly felt in developing countries and has adversely affected national development prospects. In order to effectively meet the challenge of climate change, we would also have to address poverty alleviation; then and only then would the developing countries be able to achieve internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals. It is, therefore, incumbent on the developed countries, whose development process rely heavily on the natural resource acquired from the developing countries, to provide the necessary financial resource.

Underdevelopment and mass deprivations lead to economic, political and social hardships in developing countries. Development provides an environment conducive to democracy. I would like to call upon the entire international community to work together for poverty alleviation.

The scourge of terrorism knows no boundaries. Combating terrorism is the common endeavour of the entire international community. I would like to stress here that terrorism in any form or manifestation must be rejected. It is the innocent people who bear the brunt of terrorist activities. To combat terrorism effectively, we also must address its root causes. Poverty, grievances and underlying political, economic and social conditions provide fertile ground for the spread of terrorism. These root causes of terrorism must be addressed.

Friendly relations among nations should be based on respect for the principles of equal rights and self-determination. Countries should show goodwill, practice tolerance and live together in peace and harmony. Nations have various historical backgrounds, differing cultures, and different religions and customs. Nations are not identical. However, respecting those basic principles and practicing friendship and goodwill will effectively contribute to our common endeavour to combat terrorism.

Today, the world is facing diverse problems and daunting challenges. The United Nations, which represents the world community, is called upon to resolve them. Our Organization was formed in order to maintain international peace and security, develop friendly relations among nations and promote cooperation in solving international problems of an economic, social, cultural or humanitarian character. In order to effectively address the full range of challenges, the reform of the United Nations, as called for by our leaders in the World Summit Outcome, must be successfully implemented.

I am confident, Mr. President, that under your able leadership we will make significant progress in the United Nations reform process, taking into consideration the position of the vast majority of the membership.

We are greatly disturbed to witness neocolonialism rearing its ugly head in recent years. The strategies employed are obvious. As a first step, the neocolonialists conduct media campaigns against the targeted country and spread disinformation that the country concerned is committing gross human rights violations. They portray these campaigns as a fight for democracy. Secondly, they impose sanctions, which hinder economic development and cause poverty among the people. Here I would like to stress that economic sanctions are counterproductive and can only delay the path to democracy. As a third step, they provide political, financial and other material support in order to create unrest in the country. Finally, under the pretext that a country is undemocratic and unstable and that it poses a threat to international peace and security, they intervene directly and invade the country. Current events clearly show that such a course of

action can only result in conflict and untold suffering for the people of the country.

My country is currently subjected to such courses of action. The international community should also be wary of those neocolonialist attempts. Here it must be stressed that the destiny of each and every country can only be determined by its Government and its own people. It cannot be imposed from outside. On our part, we are determined to proceed resolutely towards democracy along our chosen path.

In the life of every nation, there are times when it must face challenging situations and overcome them. Myanmar has gone through such a challenge recently. The situation would not have deteriorated, if the initial protest of a small group of activists against the rise in fuel prices had not been exploited by political opportunists. They sought to turn the situation into a political showdown, aided and abetted by certain powerful countries. They also took advantage of protests staged initially by a small group of Buddhist clergy demanding an apology for the maltreatment of monks by local authorities. The security personnel exercised the utmost restraint and did not intervene for nearly a month. However, when the mob became unruly and provocative, they were compelled to declare a curfew. Subsequently, when protestors ignored their warnings, they had to take action to restore the situation. Normalcy has now returned to Myanmar.

The rule of law is a fundamental principle accepted by nations. Without it there can be neither the orderly conduct of the day-to-day affairs of State nor the enjoyment of human rights and democracy by the people.

Myanmar is a multi-ethnic and multireligious society. It is home to over 100 national races who have lived together in weal or woe over the centuries. National unity is of paramount importance to us. We have, therefore, been striving to strengthen the fabric of our nation. In keeping with the aspirations of the people for democratization, a seven-step road map was declared, and a national convention was held to lay down the principles for a new constitution. Work was concluded on 3 September 2007, adopting by consensus the fundamental principles for the new constitution. Based on these principles, a draft constitution will be drawn up by legal experts. All the remaining steps will be implemented phase by phase.

This process is applauded by the people. To date, people in 11 townships have convened rallies in support of the successful conclusion of the national convention. Townships all over the country are expected to hold similar rallies.

Recent events make clear that there are elements within and outside the country that wish to de-rail the ongoing process so that they can take advantage of the chaos that would follow. They have become more and more emboldened and have stepped up their campaign to confront the Government.

The Myanmar Government is fully aware of its responsibility to lead the nation in the process of transformation to a disciplined democracy. We have laid out a road map and will work conscientiously to achieve our goals. Significant progress has already been made. The process can be successfully completed, sooner rather than later, if no obstacles are placed in our path. In this regard, the international community can best help Myanmar by showing greater understanding. They can begin by refraining from measures which would result in adding fuel to the fire.

One area where the international community can demonstrate good faith and objectivity is to acknowledge the good work done in Myanmar in combating the scourge of narcotic drugs. As a result of our efforts to rid our country of those drugs by the year 2014, the production of opium has plummeted to unprecedented levels. In the World Drug Report 2006, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime reported that in 2005 the total area under opium poppy cultivation showed a decrease of 26 per cent when compared to that of 2004. The World Drug Report 2007 confirms that in 2006 the total area under opium poppy cultivation was approximately 21,500 hectares, representing a decrease of 34 per cent compared to 2005. Here, I would like to stress that in terms of opium production, the decline is 88 per cent over a span of eight years, declining from 2,560 tons to an estimated 292 tons.

Myanmar regards the eradication of narcotic drugs as a national priority. We have enhanced our enforcement capacity and have been providing alternative livelihoods to farmers to encourage them to end their dependence on opium poppy cultivation. We are also taking effective measures with regard to the emerging threat posed by methamphetamine-type stimulant drugs. Myanmar neither produces nor

imports the precursor chemicals required for the production of those drugs.

Cooperation with the United Nations is a cornerstone of Myanmar's foreign policy. It is in this spirit that we continue to cooperate with the Secretary-General with regard to his good offices role mandated by the General Assembly. We have agreed to the visit of his Special Adviser, Under-Secretary-General Ibrahim Gambari, who is presently in my country. We will continue to work closely and cooperate actively with the United Nations.

The Acting President: I now call on Her Excellency The Honourable Sahana Pradhan, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Nepal.

Mrs. Pradhan (Nepal): I congratulate His Excellency Mr. Srgjan Kerim on his election as President of the General Assembly at its sixty-second session and pledge Nepal's support in the successful execution of his duties. I would also like to place on record our appreciation of the leadership of Her Excellency Sheikha Haya Rashed Al-Khalifa during the sixty-first session. My delegation expresses its appreciation to the Secretary-General, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, for his stewardship of the United Nations and wishes him a very successful tenure.

The United Nations today remains the only truly global Organization to seek solutions to the world's most pressing issues. The increasing importance of multilateralism has made the United Nations indispensable. The principles and purposes enshrined in the United Nations Charter should continue to guide us to address all the issues that confront us. Nepal has adopted these purposes and principles as the basic tenets of its foreign policy.

The General Assembly has before it an important agenda that seeks to deal with the world's most pressing issues and problems. I fully agree with the priorities that the President of the General Assembly has outlined for this session.

The pledge of a road map for development in the form of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) remains to be fully achieved. As we approach the half-way point, this Assembly should review the progress made to devise ways and means for achieving the full and effective implementation of the commitments made in the Millennium Declaration. The follow-up conference on Financing for Development to be held in Doha in 2008 should be used as an opportunity to effectively meet the financing gap and explore innovative ways of financing for development.

We commend the Secretary-General for convening a high-level meeting on climate change. I hope that the momentum generated will pave the way for an agreement on climate change with long-term and comprehensive global commitments beyond 2012, starting the process in Bali later this year.

Climate change is linked to human security, social and economic development and environmental protection. Scientific studies point out that a solution to climate change is within human reach and that we can achieve it without compromising economic development and human progress, if we start to act now.

Climate change demands a coordinated and comprehensive global response. As enshrined in the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities should be the basis for addressing the challenges of climate change. Mandatory targets for emissions reduction are necessary in order to stabilize the greenhouse gas concentration in the atmosphere at safe levels. Industrialized countries should assume leadership and demonstrate the necessary political will in adopting long-term commitments to reduce emissions.

While sea levels are rising, the Himalayan glaciers are retreating, and surrounding areas are witnessing an increasing intensity of disasters induced by climate-change, such as glacial lake outbursts, extreme rainfalls, recurring floods and massive landslides.

The President returned to the Chair.

It is ironic that the world's most vulnerable countries, such as least developed and small island countries, get the worst affects of climate change although they are the least responsible for the same. In the new compact in climate change, there should be special provisions for addressing the mitigation and adaptation needs of the least developed countries (LDCs) and small island nations to address their special vulnerabilities.

Nepal stands firm against any form of terrorism. We have been implementing the provisions of various United Nations Security Council resolutions to combat

international terrorism. Effective implementation of the provisions of the United Nations global counter-terrorism study adopted last year can foster international cooperation against terrorism. We call for an early conclusion of a comprehensive convention on international terrorism. There should be a coordinated global response, including through the mechanism at the United Nations, to address the underlying social, economic and political causes of the existence and spread of global terrorism.

Reform of the United Nations has constantly engaged us. We need to reflect contemporary realities for making the Organization more effective, representative, responsive and capable of handling the increasingly complex global problems. The General Assembly needs to be further strengthened as a true decision-making body. We should develop an effective mechanism to implement its decisions.

The reform of the United Nations should include reform of its Security Council. We support extending membership in both permanent and non-permanent categories to reflect the realities of the day. We feel that India, Brazil, Germany and Japan deserve permanent places in the expanded Council, while Africa should also be fairly represented. We also favour a tangible improvement in the working methods of the Council, and we welcome the agreement that the General Assembly should start the intergovernmental negotiations on this important issue as soon as possible.

Nepal welcomes the restructuring of the peacekeeping-related departments of the United Nations Secretariat, including the creation of a new Department of Field Support. In view of the increasing complexity and size of the peacekeeping operations, we hope these changes will further enhance effectiveness of peacekeeping operations and ensure the safety and security of peacekeeping personnel.

Nepal has continuously participated in the in United Nations peacekeeping operations for last five decades. To this date, Nepal has sent more than 60,000 troops to over 30 United Nations missions. At present, Nepal is the fourth largest contributor of troops and police personnel to United Nations peacekeeping missions. Nepalese Blue Helmets have been commended for performing extremely well in all circumstances. Many have sacrificed their invaluable lives to the cause of peace worldwide.

Peacekeeping is the soul of the United Nations, its largest function and the most successful invention in the realm of international relations. This enterprise can succeed only with meaningful participation of troop-contributing countries in decision-making processes and their increasing role in senior positions.

Nepal stands for general and complete disarmament of all weapons of mass destruction, including biological, chemical and nuclear weapons under effective international control in a time-bound manner.

We are concerned by the lack of progress in major multilateral negotiations in disarmament, including in nuclear disarmament, and in control of illegal proliferation of small arms and light weapons. We call upon Member States, especially the nuclear weapon States, to step up measures for disarmament to release much-needed dividends for development. We hope that the newly established office of High Representative for Disarmament Affairs will infuse dynamism into the process.

We look forward to the inauguration of the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament for Asia and the Pacific soon in Kathmandu, in accordance with resolution 61/94, adopted by the Assembly last year for relocation of this centre. The Government of Nepal and the United Nations Secretariat have already signed the host country agreement and the memorandum of understanding to this effect. Through this Centre, Nepal is committed to revitalizing the process of regional disarmament, including the Kathmandu process.

The ideals of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) remain as valid today as they were when the Movement was founded. The principled position of the NAM countries should guide the Assembly's deliberations. I wish to reiterate Nepal's commitment to the principles of the Non-Aligned Movement, including the principles of non-interference in internal affairs and the peaceful coexistence of States.

The Group of 77 and China has become highly relevant in advancing the interests of the developing countries in the United Nations. The Assembly should continue to protect the interests of the developing countries. We also need to advance meaningful South-South cooperation to complement global partnership and North-South cooperation.

We call for concerted efforts to address the special needs and difficulties of the LDCs and the landlocked developing countries, including the negative impacts and marginalization of globalization. We urge the developed countries to meet the targeted official development assistance to the LDCs, give products of the LDCs duty-free, quota-free and unhindered market access and extend debt relief measures to cover all LDCs. We should ensure effective implementation of the Brussels Programme of Action for LDCs for the rest of decade, based on the mid-term review held last year.

I would like to draw the attention of the development partners to addressing the special needs of the LDCs emerging from conflict and the need to support them financially and technically, to help them achieve sustained peace and development and prevent a relapse into the conflict situation.

The landlocked developing countries face special difficulties in the transit and transport of goods and services to and from the sea. The Almaty Programme should be sincerely implemented for meaningful cooperation in transit, transport and trade facilitation in the landlocked developing countries. The mid-term review process of the Programme, to be held in 2008, should focus on fulfilling gaps in implementation of the agreed commitments.

We must not further delay the World Trade Organization trade negotiations for advancing the Doha Development Agenda. Those negotiations should find ways to further protect the interests of the least developed and landlocked countries to make them able to compete in global markets. In particular, the international community must meet the resources gap, operationalize aid for trade initiatives, strengthen trading capacities and support trade adjustment costs in the LDCs and the landlocked developing countries.

Nepal welcomes the proposal for United Nations system-wide coherence on development, environment and humanitarian issues. This process should strengthen the national and regional focus and country ownership of development programmes.

We support effective gender architecture in the United Nations and an even stronger regional and country presence of the United Nations on gender issues. Nepal accords high priority to promotion of women's right, gender equality and the empowerment of women. A parliamentary declaration adopted on 30 May 2006 has provided for equal property and citizenship rights to women and for their representation in at least one third of the elected bodies, including in the Parliament.

Nepal is committed to the protection and promotion of the rights of children, including those affected by conflict. The peace agreement provides for immediate release of children if found recruited as combatants and their rehabilitation and integration back into their families. The Government is committed to implementing recommendations of the Security Council Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict in Nepal.

The United Nations has been rather slow to respond to the world's major conflicts and humanitarian crises, in places ranging from the Middle East to Darfur and Somalia. Although the agreement on the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur is a step forward, there were missed opportunities in addressing the long-standing humanitarian crisis in that region.

The situations in Afghanistan and Iraq demand more proactive United Nations engagement. The Organization should continue to play a constructive role in helping those countries to achieve stabilization, national unity and reconciliation.

We support the democratic aspirations of people all over the world. We hope that a solution to Myanmar's internal situation will be found by the people of that country through dialogue and the democratic process.

Since 1990, Nepal has been sheltering more than 100,000 refugees from Bhutan on humanitarian grounds. There is a stalemate in this long-standing crisis, mainly because of Bhutan's reluctance to implement the agreements already reached or to engage in negotiations with a view to finding some other acceptable solution. That procrastination has caused refugees to run out of patience. The true solution to this problem lies in giving refugees the opportunity to be able to return to Bhutan and to participate in the country's political process in a fully democratic way, taking into account the people's cultural diversity and human rights. However, we are positively considering the offers made by some countries to give refugees the voluntary option of third-country resettlement, should they so choose it, as part of a provisional solution. That should not absolve Bhutan of its responsibility towards

its exiled citizens, which is a problem between the refugees and the Bhutanese regime. Nepal appreciates the continued humanitarian assistance extended by the international community, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and other agencies for the care of refugees.

Nepal is in the process of leaving behind its decade-long internal conflict though a unique and internally driven peace process. We are committed to bringing that process to a successful conclusion. The Government is engaged in dialogue with the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) to ensure that the elections to the Constituent Assembly are held on 22 November, thus sincerely honouring and implementing the commitments set out in the peace agreements.

It was through dialogue that the Government of Nepal recently concluded agreements with the leaders of the Madhesi Janajati movement, enabling them to a have stronger voice in the political arena and broader representation in the Constituent Assembly.

Despite the challenges associated with the peace process, the Government is determined to hold the elections to the Constituent Assembly on time. With the necessary technical, legal and logistical competence, the Election Commission has made preparations for holding the elections as scheduled and in a free and fair manner. I would like to invite friendly countries and organizations to send observers to Nepal during the elections.

The people of Nepal have expressed their desire for a peaceful political and socio-economic transformation. They have spoken out in favour of an inclusive, democratic and participatory restructuring of the State. I have every confidence that the peace process will reap numerous dividends for the Nepalese people through the creation of a new Nepal. In that process, we expect generous assistance from our development partners, including assistance in meeting Nepal's reconstruction and development needs.

On behalf of the people and the Government of Nepal, I wish to express sincere gratitude to the international community for its strong support and solidarity during our struggle for democracy and our ongoing peace process.

Last year, we invited the United Nations to facilitate the peace process through arms monitoring and through technical support for the Constituent Assembly elections. We express our appreciation to the Secretary-General for his personal attention and interest in assisting the peace process. We also commend the role played by the United Nations Mission in Nepal in that process.

The Government is steadfast in protecting and promoting human rights, in keeping with its international commitments. We welcome the adoption by the Human Rights Council of the universal periodic review of all Member States. That exercise should be free from politicization, selectivity and double standards.

There has been a remarkable improvement in the protection of human rights in Nepal since the start of the peace process. The Government has extended full cooperation to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in Nepal. The recent appointment of members of the National Human Rights Commission of Nepal is expected to further enhance our national capability to protect and promote human rights.

The Government is determined to bring an end to the environment of impunity that was present during the armed conflict. We hope that the establishment of a truth and reconciliation commission, as stipulated in the peace agreement, will also help us to put our past behind us and to prevent a recurrence of such grave human rights violations.

As a nation that has a diverse ethnic composition and that is home to various indigenous peoples, Nepal welcomes the adoption of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples by the General Assembly this year. We hope that the Declaration will serve as a useful reference for indigenous issues throughout the world.

In conclusion, the General Assembly has before it an important opportunity to address the most pressing issues of our times — issues that are of lasting significance. We should strive to advance agreements to address climate change, follow up on the Millennium Development Goals, seek new resources for development financing, break the impasse in the negotiations on trade and disarmament and reform the Security Council. We should also seek solutions to unresolved conflicts and humanitarian crises.

Today, the world's major problems demand the leadership of the United Nations. We should rise to the

occasion and demonstrate our ability to work together to solve urgent problems that confront us. Solutions to most global problems are within our reach if we act in unison, guided by our collective wisdom and reason. Together, we can make progress in all these areas. I pledge Nepal's constructive participation in arriving at important decisions on all these issues here at the United Nations.

The President: Before proceeding further, I would like to remind members that, as announced in today's *Journal*, the informal meeting of the plenary to observe the first International Day of Non-Violence will be held tomorrow, 2 October, from 9.30 to 10 a.m. in this Hall. All are invited to attend.

I now call on His Excellency Mr. Mohamed Benaissa, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of Morocco.

Mr. Benaissa (Morocco) (*spoke in Arabic*): I should like at the outset to express heartfelt congratulations to you, Sir, on your election as President of the General Assembly at its present session, as well as my best wishes for every success during your tenure. I also wish to thank Her Excellency Sheikha Haya Rashed Al-Khalifa for her constructive and tireless efforts during her remarkable and fruitful presidency at the previous session, which was a source of pride for her country, Bahrain, and for the international community.

As this is the first session of the General Assembly under our newly appointed Secretary-General, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, I should like to reaffirm, on behalf of the Kingdom of Morocco, our full confidence in and support for his tireless efforts and good offices aimed at enabling the United Nations to attain its lofty objectives and to fulfil the aspirations of all nations. It is our hope that, at the dawn of the third millennium, a more just and effective world system can emerge, enabling nations to achieve collective peace and sustainable development.

Our session takes place at the eve of the celebration by the United Nations of the sixtieth anniversary of two important historical events that have marked its activities, forged its identity and proved its added value and its outstanding contribution to strengthening international cooperation, protecting human dignity and consolidating world peace and security. These events are the General Assembly's adoption in 1948 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the deployment of the first United Nations peacekeeping operation in that same year. In this context, it is appropriate to pause and take stock of what has been done in these two vital areas, and to outline the work objectives of our Organization in order to develop and optimize our common assets in a complex international melieu.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights laid the foundations of international consensus regarding universal values and subsequently contributed to international efforts for the codification, protection and respect of basic cultural, social, economic and political rights. To this end, the international community is invited, through the United Nations, to take concrete measures to implement the provisions of this Declaration and give effect to confirm concretely its political and legal values.

In that connection, His Majesty King Mohammed VI stated in a royal address on 9 December 1999 that among the appropriate means of ensuring respect for human rights was the commitment to the relevant international covenants and the setting up of mechanisms for respecting and safeguarding these rights. He added that those legal and institutional instruments were, however, insufficient if respect for human rights was not part of standard conduct at all levels, or if, in other words, it did not become a shared culture.

The Kingdom of Morocco has embarked, under His Majesty's enlightened leadership, on a thorough and ambitious process of political openness, human development and social modernization. In parallel, it is willing to participate in constructive international efforts aimed at establishing world consensus on human rights concepts, so that they no longer constitute a source of conflict and confrontation but are rather a motive for cooperation and consultation. Those concepts should not remain mere universal values but should become a reality, taking into consideration the diversity and indivisibility of human rights.

In this regard, the Kingdom of Morocco proposed last March, in the Human Rights Council, the adoption of a universal declaration on training and education in the culture of human rights, whose objective would be to consolidate and reinforce the values, principles and concepts of human rights by all international social components, so that they become a daily concern and a responsible practice. Morocco hopes that this proposal

will be supported by all States, so that it may constitute a valuable contribution to the celebration of the sixtieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human rights.

Peacekeeping operations are a key element of the activities of the United Nations, embodying the collective security principle that is one of the pillars of the United Nations Charter. Thanks to this mechanism, the United Nations has displayed a great capacity to adapt to change and has been able to participate in a direct and effective manner in the reinforcement of international peace.

The importance of peacekeeping operations has increased with the evolution of the traditional concept and the accumulation of tasks, which are no longer limited to peacekeeping per se. These tasks have also broadened in scope to encompass assistance to States undergoing reconstruction or engaged in the implementation of transitional justice, the consolidation of human rights, or good governance.

In this respect, the Kingdom of Morocco has been a pioneer in United Nations peacekeeping efforts, sending since 1960 more than 50,000 Blue Helmets to 13 peacekeeping operations across four continents. Thanks to their sacrifice and determination to uphold the principles of the United Nations, the Royal Armed Forces, along with the other peacekeeping troops, helped the United Nations to win the Nobel Peace prize.

In view of its cumulative experience and field expertise, the Kingdom of Morocco believes that it is high time to examine ways and means of reinforcing the legal basis and organizational framework of peacekeeping operations, while taking into consideration the changes undergone by this United Nations mechanism, as well as the need for improvement of the deployment conditions and work arrangements of its personnel.

Accordingly, the Kingdom of Morocco proposes the organization next year of a high-level meeting to examine this issue in all its aspects, with a view to adopting recommendations for the development of new norms and work arrangements that will ensure the success of peacekeeping operations.

Despite its efforts, Africa still faces major security challenges and significant difficulties in improving the health and living conditions of its citizens. Given its deep-rooted African identity and its profound historical, human and cultural ties with African States, the Kingdom of Morocco has, as directed by His Majesty the King, made its relations with the continent one of the priorities of its foreign policy. These relations are based on the principles of mutual respect, active solidarity, fruitful cooperation and constructive involvement in the regional initiatives and international strategies related to the continent.

Besides participating in development programmes aimed at effectively revitalizing South-South cooperation and undertaking numerous solidarity activities with African States victims of natural disasters, the Kingdom of Morocco hosted the first African Conference on Human Development, held in April 2007 in Rabat in cooperation with the United Nations Development Programme. The Conference created an opportunity to establish a complementary strategy to meet the particular needs of Africa in the context of achieving the Millennium Development Goals.

In this regard, the Rabat Declaration on human development and the plan of action and recommendations of the Conference, constitute a framework of reference for the holding next year of a high-level meeting on Africa and development, as proposed by Morocco. Likewise, the conclusions of the Rabat Conference could contribute significantly to the work of the World Millennium Development Goals summit to be held next year in response to a proposal made by the United Kingdom Prime Minister.

Morocco expresses the hope that the Secretary-General's next report on the causes of conflicts and the promotion of peace and sustainable development in Africa will contain practical recommendations and a clear political vision aimed at the reinforcement of stability, peace and security on the African continent, the consolidation of democracy and human rights, respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of African States, and the peaceful settlement of disputes in accordance with the principle of good neighbourliness.

The Moroccan Sahara issue, one of the longest regional disputes in Africa, is at a historical turning point as a result of the launching of the Manhassett negotiations between the parties to the dispute, held under United Nations auspices. This turning point results from the dynamic created by the Moroccan

autonomy plan for Moroccan Shara, a plan which has opened promising perspectives for overcoming the stalemate on this issue at the United Nations. It offers the fundamental elements necessary for a realistic, applicable, definitive and final political solution to a regional dispute that has hindered the development of a strong and homogeneous Maghreb that interacts with its geopolitical and geostrategic environment.

The Moroccan autonomy plan, which since 2004 has answered the calls by the Security Council for the need to find a political solution to that dispute, is in conformity with the provisions of international law. It is the result of wide-ranging international consultations and in-depth deliberations involving inhabitants of the region through the Royal Advisory Council for Saharan Affairs.

In the light of that positive dynamic, the Security Council adopted resolution 1754 (2007), which represented a departure from former approaches in the treatment of the issue, since it called for negotiations while taking into account recent developments, in particular the Moroccan plan and the efforts of the Kingdom which the Security Council has recognized as serious and credible.

The Kingdom of Morocco, which took part in those negotiations in good faith and with an open and constructive attitude, reiterates its commitment to advance the process in order to reach a final solution to the dispute within the framework of its national sovereignty and territorial integrity as well as on the basis of the autonomy plan, as the ultimate objective of the negotiation process and as an open, flexible and indivisible offer. The solution to this regional dispute in the light of the Moroccan plan would lead to the creation of a stable regional security order, based on cooperation between the States of the region, which would deal with the serious security challenges of the region, including terrorism, human trafficking and other clandestine activities. The impact of such activities will go beyond the region and will affect European, Mediterranean and West African countries as well.

The difficult circumstances in the Middle East require strengthened coordinated efforts in order to put an end to a lengthy and bitter conflict that has caused great suffering for the people of the region for more than half a century.

The Kingdom of Morocco, which follows closely all those developments, affirms once again from this rostrum the pressing need to reactivate the peace process in the Middle East according to a comprehensive approach and on the basis of agreements signed by the parties, the Road Map and the Arab Peace Initiative. That is a strategic choice and reflects the sincere will of the Arab States to search for a just and lasting peace in the Middle East — a peace that guarantees the national rights of the Palestinian people, including the right to establish an independent State, with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital, and withdrawal from occupied Arab territories in Syria and Lebanon, in order to allow the States and peoples of the region to live in peace and security.

Morocco is optimistic about the positive results that will ensure from the international conference on Middle East peace to be held in the United States before the end of this year. Moreover, the Kingdom of Morocco, which chairs the Al-Quds Committee in the person of His Majesty King Mohammed VI, insists once more on the need to respect the special status of Jerusalem and to preserve its cultural and spiritual identity. In that respect, His Majesty King Mohammed VI has endeavoured to draw the attention of the United Nations and influential actors to the illegal, invalid archaeological excavations around the Al-Aqsa Mosque and to obtain their good offices so as to put an end to them.

The Kingdom of Morocco follows with great concern the difficult situation in the brotherly country of Iraq and calls upon the various sects and factions to allow the virtues of wisdom and clear-sightedness to prevail, through serious dialogue and national reconciliation with the aim of preserving the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Iraq and in order to put an end to the cycle of violence threatening its stability, security and its unity.

Finally, I wish to recall that the world is undergoing considerable changes and is confronted with numerous serious and global challenges, such as climate change, which is the main topic of this annual session. All these challenges call for multilateral institutions that are able to establish effective multilateral cooperation and coordination among States to promote coherence and synergy among the various national and regional initiatives. Hence the crucial importance of a stronger United Nations that enjoys the confidence and commitment of its Member States and

their support in order to make a success of its reform programme. The Organization also needs to strengthen its credibility in order to harmonize its agenda with our crucial priorities and with the need to ensure a better future for humanity within the framework of more balanced, interdependent and tolerant international relations.

The President: I shall now call on those representatives who wish to speak in exercise of the right of reply. May I remind members that, in accordance with General Assembly decision 34/401, statements in exercise of the right of reply are limited to 10 minutes for the first intervention and to five minutes for the second intervention and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. Salsabili (Islamic Republic of Iran): I have heard again a number of absurd distortions and baseless allegations against my country by the representative of the Zionist regime, a regime which has based its policies, practices and behaviour on occupation, State terrorism, violence and bloodshed. I would like to place on record that my delegation rejects those baseless allegations and distortions and also stresses that this is yet another preposterous and indeed well-worn practice by this regime to distract the international community's attention from its criminal policies and abhorrent atrocities in Palestine and elsewhere in the region.

It is evident that no amount of slander or deception or a smear campaign by the Zionist regime can cloud the obvious fact that the regime poses the sole and the most real, serious and urgent threat that the world and the region are facing today. It is therefore imperative for the international community to counter such a threat decisively. Moreover, that regime persists in its systematic and intentional defiance of many international laws and norms as well as dozens of United Nations resolutions, as is known to all.

In that context it suffices to refer briefly to the abhorrent policies and practices of that regime as far as human rights and weapons of mass destruction are concerned. The record of that regime on issues such as State terrorism and suppression of people living under its brutal occupation is well known and needs no elaboration. The appalling and notorious record of the Zionist regime's violations of all human rights — first and foremost the right to life as the most basic human right — is well documented by many international human rights bodies and organizations, especially the United Nations human rights machinery. The ill-intended and futile attempts of that regime to raise allegations against others regarding human rights situations is nothing but a ridiculous practice to distract the attention of the international community from its shameful human rights record.

On the question of the defiance of international law, particular reference should also be made to its concealment and unabated pursuance of nuclear arsenals during the past several decades. The Prime Minister of the Zionist regime's acknowledgement of the unlawful possession of nuclear weapons in his interview with a German television channel on 11 December 2006 revealed the real nature of that deceptive regime's clandestine nuclear activities, which pose a serious and continuing threat to international as well as regional peace and security.

It is undisputable that nuclear weapons in the hands of a regime marked with a long catalogue of various crimes, such as State terrorism, aggression and occupation, present a real threat to regional and international peace and security, and thus require urgent and decisive action by the international community. Indeed, that regime should face a united front and must be kept under continuous pressure to relinquish its terrorist acts and its nuclear programme, and to place all its nuclear facilities under international monitoring.

Mr. Botora (Ethiopia): The Foreign Minister of Eritrea, in his statement this afternoon, once again levelled accusations against Ethiopia about the lack of progress in the implementation of the Eritrea-Ethiopia Boundary Commission's delimitation decision for border demarcation and in the peace process. It is no surprise at all for delegations familiar with general debates in the past to hear such baseless accusations from Eritrea. What the Foreign Minister said, in view of the actions taken by Eritrea for quite some time, is nothing but an insult to the intelligence of the international community.

Eritrea moved its armed forces into the demilitarized zone known as the Temporary Security Zone — from which Ethiopia had willingly withdrawn its troops — displacing United Nations peacekeeping Forces and violating the Algiers Agreements of 2000. Not only does Eritrea continue to violate the Agreements and defy Security Council resolutions,

which urged it to withdraw its forces and create the necessary condition for demarcation to begin, but, on the contrary, it has increased its military presence in the demilitarized zone by adding heavy military equipment and military personnel, as confirmed by the recent report of the Secretary-General to the Security Council dated 30 April 2007 (S/2007/250).

As a result, today there is no demilitarized zone that can separate the two armies and allow the border demarcation process to begin. Instead of complying with the Algiers Agreements and Security Council resolutions, Eritrea has reinforced its military presence in the demilitarized zone, thereby making it completely non-existent and further strengthening the already severe restrictions imposed on the freedom of movement and monitoring operations of the United Nations Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea (UNMEE).

My Government, therefore, in view of the flagrant violations of the Algiers Agreements, has sent notification to Eritrea reminding it that unless its forces are withdrawn completely from the Temporary Security Zone, allowing UNMEE to carry out its monitoring mandate, Ethiopia has the inherent right to invoke all peaceful and legal measures.

Ethiopia has accepted the Boundary Commission's delimitation decision without condition. Ethiopia remains committed to the objectives and the purpose of the Algiers Agreements. Ethiopia will continue to cooperate with all concerned parties with a view to bringing about sustainable peace and avoiding another crisis.

What the Foreign Minister said with regard to Ethiopia's presence in Somalia was a pure fabrication devoid of an iota of truth. It is abundantly obvious to the international community and to the General Assembly that Ethiopia is in Somalia upon the request of the legitimate Transitional Federal Government of Somalia and its parliament. Ethiopia has no separate agenda in Somalia, other than that of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development, the African Union and the Security Council, which is to support and assist the legitimate Transitional Federal Government and the federal institutions in their efforts to bring about stability and sustainable peace in the country.

It is Eritrea that is actively destabilizing Somalia by training, equipping, financing and politically and diplomatically supporting well-known international terrorists, including those appearing on the consolidated list of the Security Council. The Security Council Monitoring Group on Somalia, in its recent report to the Council (S/2007/436, enclosure), confirmed that Eritrea is a conduit for arms to the terrorists in Somalia, who aim to destabilize the country and the region as a whole. It is therefore the responsibility of the international community to take appropriate action against Eritrea to stop its destabilizing acts in support of international terrorists in Somalia and throughout our region.

The meeting rose at 7.25 p.m.